

## Canadian government apologizes for residential schools policy

By Deborah Gyapong (Catholic News Service)  
Published Jun 16, 2008

OTTAWA (CNS) -- On behalf of the Canadian government, Prime Minister Stephen Harper offered an apology to former students of Indian residential schools June 11 in the House of Commons.

"To the approximately 80,000 living former students and all family members and communities, the government of Canada now recognizes that it was wrong to forcibly remove children from their homes, and we apologize for having done this," Harper said.

He apologized for the assimilation policy that since 1870 aimed to "kill the Indian in the child."

Leaders of Canada's First Nations, Inuit and Metis communities, and both the oldest and the youngest residential schools survivors, sat in a circle in the center of the chamber, while aboriginal peoples from across Canada packed the galleries. Many were in tears during the occasion.

"What happened today signifies a new dawn in the relationship between us and the rest of Canada," said Assembly of First Nations National Chief Phil Fontaine. "We are and always have been an indispensable part of the Canadian identity.

"Our peoples, our history, and our present being are the essence of Canada," he said. "The attempts to erase our identities hurt us deeply, but it also hurt all Canadians and impoverished the character of this nation."

Harper apologized for how the policy not only separated children from their families, but also from their cultures and traditions, leaving a void in their lives and communities. He apologized for how the schools robbed students of adequate parenting skills, sowing the seeds for problems in subsequent generations.

"We now recognize that far too often these institutions gave rise to abuse or neglect and were inadequately controlled, and we apologize for failing to protect you," he said. "Not only did you suffer these abuses as children, but as you became parents you were powerless to protect your own children from suffering the same experience, and for this we are sorry."

The three opposition party leaders followed Harper with detailed apologies, laced with specific examples of abuse and deprivation at the schools run primarily by the Anglican, United and Presbyterian churches and by Roman Catholic dioceses and religious orders.

In a last-minute change in protocol, members of Parliament unanimously agreed to allow the aboriginal leaders to respond from the floor of the House instead of at a news conference elsewhere. Reported concerns that the apology might not be accepted as full enough proved unfounded.

Wearing a ceremonial headdress, Fontaine, who had entered the chamber in a procession alongside the prime minister, seemed to choke back tears.

"Never again will this house consider us the Indian problem just for being who we are," he said, acknowledging the government had taken "full responsibility for this dreadful chapter of our shared history."

"Brave survivors, through the telling of their painful stories, have stripped white supremacy of its authority and legitimacy," he said. "The irresistibility of speaking truth to power is real.

"I reach out to all Canadians today in this spirit of reconciliation," he said.

Archbishop Gerard Pettipas of Grouard-McLennan, Alberta, said, "This is saying we want a new relationship with our First Nations people."

Archbishop Pettipas represented the 50 Catholic dioceses and religious orders involved in the 2006 Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, a \$2.2 billion (US\$2.15 billion) package that has dispensed "common experience payments" averaging \$25,000 (US\$24,500) to every student of the Indian residential schools.

"Healing doesn't happen overnight," the archbishop said, noting that people can take years to overcome hurt in their lives. But when someone who has been part of that pain says "I'm sorry" that has a powerful impact, he said.

For some residential school survivors, the moment was bittersweet.



Canada's Prime Minister Stephen Harper issues an apology to aboriginals in the House of Commons on Parliament Hill in Ottawa June 11. Canada formally apologized for forcing 150,000 aboriginal children into church-run residential schools, where many say they were abused.

(CNS photo/Chris Wattie, Reuters)

### LATEST NATION / WORLD



**Religious, rights groups applaud Supreme Court in habeas corpus case**  
BY DENNIS SADOWSKI (CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE)

Leaders in the human rights and anti-torture movements said the June 12 U.S. Supreme Court decision defending the right of habeas corpus for detainees at the U.S.-run Guantanamo Bay prison in Cuba is a hopeful sign that upholds American values for anyone accused of even the most heinous offenses.  
: JUN 16, 2008



**Retired law school dean, widowed grandfather, ordained to priesthood**  
BY STEVE EUVINO (CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE)

A 71-year-old retired law school dean and widowed grandfather became one of three newly ordained priests June 7 in the Diocese of Gary.  
"I'm at the highest point I could ever be," said Father David T. Link, on the day of his ordination at Holy Angels Cathedral in Gary. "I know the Holy Spirit and my wife, Barbara, are here with me."  
: JUN 15, 2008



**Russert remembered for his fondness for church, faithfulness**  
BY CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE

NBC News Washington bureau chief and "Meet the Press" moderator Tim Russert, who died June 13 at the age of 58, was remembered for his warm lifelong ties to the Catholic Church and his support for Catholic education as well as for his career covering politics.  
: JUN 14, 2008

#### Calendar of Events

Today is Jun 17, 2008

#### ST. RAPHAEL PARISH

St. Raphael Parish in Naperville plans to sponsor a Christian beginnings workshop from 9:15-11:15 a.m. May 19-30 (no class May 26). The cost is \$150 per person, which includes materials. For more information 630-355-4545 ext. 112.

#### ST. RAPHAEL PARISH

St. Raphael Parish in Naperville plans to hold "Matthew: A Gospel for Times of Transition," a one-day retreat, from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. May 31. The cost is \$25 per person. For more information 630-355-4545 ext. 112.

#### ST. JUDE PARISH

St. Jude Parish in Joliet plans to hold vacation Bible school June 16-20. Registration is scheduled May 17-June 2. For more information 815-725-2209.

#### THE ST. AMBROSE HOME SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

The St. Ambrose Home School Association plans to co-sponsor a musical performance at 6:30 p.m. June 7 and at 3 p.m. June 8 in the Moser Performing Arts Center Auditorium at University of St. Francis in Joliet. For complete details 708-557-7070.

#### ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE PARISH

St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in Naperville plans to host "EcoMission: Growing Our Souls and Saving Our Planet" May 31-June 12. Complete details, including a schedule of topics, are available at [www.stapostle.org](http://www.stapostle.org).

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"The state has apologized," said Katherine Sorbey of Mi'kmaq First Nation in Restigouche, Quebec. "The Canadian government has apologized.

"The pope hasn't, has he?" she asked.

A baptized Catholic, Sorbey said she stopped going to church in the 1990s when she became overwhelmed with her recollections of her residential schools experience.

"It also affects the spirit," she said, adding that she now will be going back to church.

Agnes Mills, a survivor of an Anglican residential school in the Yukon, said, "I have mixed feelings, but I have a lot of hope."

The last stage of the settlement agreement, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, is preparing to hold hearings around the country and present its findings in 2013. Catholic leaders also plan to take part.

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### **SS. PETER AND PAUL PARISH**

SS. Peter and Paul Parish in Naperville is offering the Tridentine Mass. The Latin Mass is celebrated at 5:30 p.m. Sundays. For more information 630-718-2114.

### **IMMACULATE CONCEPTION HIGH SCHOOL**

The class of 1958 of Immaculate Conception High School in Elmhurst plans to hold its 50-year class reunion Oct. 3-4 at the Wyndham Drake Oakbrook Hotel. For details or to help locate alumni 630-833-2939.

### **MARY QUEEN OF HEAVEN PARISH**

Mary Queen of Heaven Parish in Elmhurst plans to continue its Women in the Church/Women in the Bible speaker series.

The schedule is as follows:

Franciscan Father Benet Fonck, a renowned presenter, is slated to speak at noon Aug. 10 about St. Clare.

Dominican Sister Barbara Reid, a prominent biblical scholar, is scheduled to speak at 7 p.m. Oct. 14 about women of the New Testament.

Mary Foley, pastoral life coordinator at the Elmhurst parish, is planned to speak at 7 p.m. Nov. 4 about "Women in Ecclesial Ministry Today."

For complete details 630-279-5700.

[See the whole Calendar](#)