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participation of
the Government
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Canada

One Manitowaning Road

opinion

"who dares not offend, cannot be honest"

editorial

An apology marks the start of reconciliation, not the end

The residential school system and the damage it did during the more than the century and a half it was imposed upon the Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island came close to succeeding in its goal of expunging the culture, traditions and languages of the first people of this land. For more than 150 years, children were yanked from the bosom of their families, taken by strangers to an unfamiliar environment where stern figures schooled in Victorian-era mores imposed an alien lifestyle to expunge the "Indian" from their very souls.

For all of its supposed "altruistic" intent of bettering the lives of its charges, the residential school system was the front line of a brutal and genocidal government policy aimed at removing from existence the Indigenous people, and by extension those sovereign nations upon whose territories the English colonies and later nation of Canada were founded.

The governments of the day sought allies to implement its policy of cultural extinction and found them among the churches. Catholic, Anglican, Methodist (later United) and a host of smaller denominations already had an infrastructure in place and experience in proselytizing their faiths among the many Indigenous nations. They eagerly stepped up to aid in the effort of "civilizing the savage" all the better to bring their souls to a Christian god.

Civilizing to the Victorian mind meant not sparing the rod and Catholic nuns, priests and brothers, along with protestant pastors and other missionaries, were zealous in those measures.

The residential school system also provided church administrators in all denominations with the perfect dumping ground, out of sight and largely out of mind, for all of those "problem" employees whose presence in urban (white) settlements were causing scandals. There, predators of all kinds found open season amongst Indigenous children.

Those children and their families had nowhere to turn for justice and were viewed as something less than human by a society whose mechanisms of law remain steeped in systemic racism to this very day.

That insufficient funds were allocated for maintaining the residential schools, with the inevitable result of malnutrition, overcrowding, disease further weakening the Indigenous children in their charge, was just another instance of the racist double standard by which such things were measured.

The Roman Catholic church and its administrators, the cardinals, bishops, priests, lay brothers, mothers superior, nuns and lay person-

nel were not alone in their failings, to be sure. The entire non-Native society that swamped First Nations traditional territories across Turtle Island, all denominations without exception, believed in what they were doing and were unwilling, or unable, to fathom how that could be wrong.

So it came to pass that a mirror was held up to the horrid actions of the past and churches began to apologize for their role in a blatantly genocidal attempt to solve the "Indian" question. The United Church was first out of the block in 1986, with the Anglicans following in 1991. The Catholic orders and bishops have offered apologies, and the previous Pope also apologized in 2009, but did so from Rome. Now, Pope Francis has offered an apology on Canadian soil, as had been one of the primary recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Residential Schools. These are a start, but they can only be a start.

You cannot come to reconciliation between parties without an admission of guilt by the perpetrators of past transgressions. It is nigh onto impossible to forgive someone who will not admit they did anything wrong—turning the other cheek notwithstanding.

There is a bizarre disconnect within the hierarchy of organized churches, the administration responsible for the smooth operation and sustainability of the religious machine, and the goal of spreading the Word of God and love for thy neighbour; a disconnect that tends to allow impossibly evil actions to be swept under the table, hidden away in remote hinterlands and buried in unmarked graves in order to preserve the supposed "greater good" of the church's fiscal health.

Mitigation of responsibility and complicity becomes paramount in order to limit liability of the church. Thus records keepers obfuscate and delay the release of records, funds are allocated more to offset legal costs than to redress wrongs or repair damages done, continuing the evil through bureaucratic means. This must stop.

The Pope's apology is but a beginning. Unless concrete steps to repair the relationship between Indigenous communities and the church follow, the longer those steps take to implement, the weight and meaning of any apology will be diluted. This stands for the church, but also our nation's federal, provincial and municipal governments and the corporate world that drives our economy.

It's all fine and good to say you are sorry for what you have done, but you have to show that you really mean your regret through concrete action—or your pretty words will soon be eaten.

letters

A note of thanks for all those who lobbied for medicine access

Hundreds of people on Manitoulin Island made direct appeals for son's access to Trikafta

To the Expositor:

I am writing today to inform you and thank you for a medical opportunity that has been granted to my son.

Four years ago, my family actively began lobbying to secure a medicine that corrects the defective gene that causes cystic fibrosis. Our efforts were part of a much larger campaign initiated by Cystic Fibrosis Canada and others. Provincial and federal governments were the target of the campaign. It took many years, but Trikafta (a product of Vertex Pharmaceuticals) has now been made available to many of those who suffer from cystic fibrosis.

I am aware of hundreds of people on Manitoulin Island, in Sarnia, Peterborough, and Ottawa, who made direct appeals for access to Trikafta (originally Orkambi, an older variation) on behalf of my son and others who have cystic fibrosis. Media such as The Manitoulin Expositor, Great Lakes Country 103 and the Sarnia Observer helped create awareness for my son and others like him. Little Current Public School and the Town of NEMI were so kind with their cystic fibrosis day of awareness. Politically, MPPs Bob Bailey, Rick Nicholls, Jeff

Yurek and Michael Mantha all took special interest and action to support those who have cystic fibrosis. Numerous churches also gave my family the opportunity to explain our efforts to secure this medication.

Special mention must also be made to the cystic fibrosis clinic team at Health Sciences North Sudbury for their caring and dedication to my son.

It is too soon to know what affect the medication will have. There is a growing body of evidence that suggests Trikafta will benefit him. Such medication can offer the chance of a normal lifestyle. It may reduce the likelihood of transplants and other devastating scenarios related to people suffering from cystic fibrosis.

We don't know for sure what the future will hold for my teenaged son. All we asked for was the opportunity to provide him with as normal a life as possible. You have provided him and many others like him with that opportunity.

Thank you,

Zak Nicholls
Little Current

High speed bass boats and McGregor Bay waters don't mix well

Potential disasters averted by quick response and luck

To the Expositor:

When high speed bass boats (running 90-100 km/hr) invaded our McGregor Bay neighborhood without warning on July 9, the tournament activities of the Nickel City Bass Club threatened the safety of all: the disastrously close call of two kids at a narrow channel by Harrison Rock the most salient example.

The family was in two small boats returning to their cottage. When the children and the parents turned the corner at Harrison Rock, a tournament bass boat, travelling at full speed on the other side of the rock, nearly collided with them. Both the kids' and the bass boat had to swerve quickly and significantly in order to avoid a collision. The parents were terrified watching this and it was a very, very close call.

Time is of the essence in these competitions. I don't know of their threat in other places, but in our community of 30,000 Islands, narrow channels and poor sight lines there is no place for speeding bass boats. Our boat traffic is small town "local traffic" consisting of work boats, small pleasure craft, canoes and kayaks. Due to its geography, people in McGregor Bay move at a pace legally suitable for, and respectful of the safety of all the people who live and work and play here.

During the tournament there were many cases where the Transport Canada speed limit of 10km/h within 30m of a shoreline were flagrantly ignored and speeds in excess of 90km/h were witnessed by several people. If the speeding through our neighborhood by their competitors cannot be policed and controlled by their organization, they should find another location with wide open spaces more suitable for their compe-

titions. The consequences for the Nickel City Bass Club and our community could well be disastrous if they don't.

Mike Toombs
McGregor Bay

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Expositor reached out to Nickel City Bass Club seeking response to the concerns contained in this letter. The club had not responded by press time Monday.

Old bridge acting up?

Why don't we hear about the replacement?

To the Expositor:

I am reading lots about the inefficiencies of the old bridge. Why am I not reading about the new bridge? Has this idea once again faded away until an emergency? I for one support a new two lane lift bridge, leaving the old bridge in the open position with a path from the new location. Anyone for a restaurant/coffee shop/souvenir shop on the old bridge?

I am sure locals and tourists would like to walk the bridge, have a beverage and almost reach out and touch the boats as they pass by.

Can't wait!

John Royal
NEMI