



Teaching Support Staff Union

23 November 2015

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
PC, MP, Prime Minister of Canada
Prime Minister's Office Ottawa
Ontario K1A 0A2

Dear Mr. Trudeau,

We are writing regarding the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and to encourage you to implement the recommendations in the TRC's Calls to Action as soon as possible. As Teaching Assistants, Tutor Markers, Sessional Instructors and English Language and Interpretation educators at Simon Fraser University, members of the Teaching Support Staff Union (TSSU) feel it is critical that we bring forward several key issues from these Calls to Action.

Specifically, as university instructors we want to affirm the importance of the proposals outlined in the sections on "Education" and "Education for Reconciliation." These include eliminating the educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples living in Canada; working with Aboriginal peoples to draft new education legislation; providing funding to ensure that Aboriginal students have greater access to post-secondary education; making age-appropriate curricula on residential schools, treaties, and Aboriginal history mandatory for students from kindergarten to Grade 12; and educating teachers on how to properly implement these curricula.

These steps are necessary in order to achieve reconciliation. Aboriginal students face discrimination, largely due to pervasive attitudes among non-Aboriginal students who frequently have low levels of knowledge about the history of Aboriginal genocide and assimilation perpetrated by the state and by churches in Canada. Ensuring that young people in public school are taught this history is the first step in eliminating these harmful ideas from Canadian society.

We acknowledge that implementing these proposals will be costly. However, it is important to consider that non-Aboriginal Canadians' prosperity has been predicated on the Canadian state's appropriation of Aboriginal territories, mistreatment of Aboriginal peoples, and underfunding of resources for Aboriginal peoples. Real reconciliation must include fiscal reparations for the fact that the Canadian state and non-Aboriginal Canadians have benefited immeasurably from the theft of Aboriginal lands as well as the federal government's historic, and to some degree ongoing, decisions to not honour the treaty relationships it entered into with Aboriginal peoples.

Many of our members watched the recent federal election with great interest, and we heard you promise to enact the recommendations of the TRC. We are eager to hear from you about how and when this will happen, and be assured that we will hold your government to this promise.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Adam Dyck". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Adam Dyck
Chair – TSSU

CC: Dr. Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs
Ms. Christy Clark, Premier of British Columbia
Mr. John Rustad, Minister of Aboriginal Relations & Reconciliation for BC
Mr. Mike Bernier, Minister of Education for BC
Mr. Andrew Petter, President of Simon Fraser University
Senate, Simon Fraser University