



IRSSS Bulletin

(April 27, 2009)

Meeting between the Pope and Survivors



Survivors May Have Response to Meeting Between the Pope and Delegation of Residential School Survivors

The Indian Residential School Survivors Society (IRSSS) is informing residential school Survivors that National Chief Phil Fontaine and a delegation including Residential School Survivors will be meeting with Pope Benedict XVI, the Head of the Catholic Church, on April 29th.

The National Chief recently said:

“It is my fervent hope that this Papal Audience will result in a statement from Pope Benedict XVI to all the survivors of the Indian Residential Schools for the role that the Catholic Church played in the administration and operation of the schools and the harms these schools inflicted on our people. This will greatly assist the task of healing and reconciliation for survivors, Catholics and all Canadians.”

—National Chief Phil Fontaine, AFN Press Release (April 15, 2009)

About 75% of the residential schools in Canada were run by Catholic entities and the majority of Residential School Survivors went to a Catholic residential school.

Some of those Survivors have maintained a strong connection to the church while others have walked away from organized religion altogether.

Whatever the case, hearing about this meeting or a statement from the Pope may have an emotional impact on you.

Some Survivors have told us that choosing to become aware of their response in these situations has helped them make two important changes in their lives:

1. They have begun changing the way residential school affects them; and
2. They have begun to break their Residential School Pattern of Behaviour.

You too can start to make similar changes. You are not in residential school anymore. You are in charge of your life now.

You are not alone. You can reach out for help if you need to.



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What can you do?

Right now, you can:

1. Do nothing.
2. Read some of the news stories about the visit.
3. Think about how the stories make you feel.
4. Try to figure out what things you might feel if the Pope acknowledges residential school abuses.
5. Predict what will happen for you if the Pope chooses not to apologize.
6. Talk with elders, friends and family about what you're feeling.
7. Think about what an Apology means to you in your culture.
8. Let AFN know what you think of the visit and/or what you might want in an Apology.

Who can you reach out to:

- Elders;
- Friends;
- Family;
- Co-workers;
- Indian Residential School Survivors Society**
1-800-721-0066 (8:30 am to 5 pm Monday to Friday);
- National Residential School Survivor Support Line**
1-866-925-4419 (24 hours a day, seven days a week);
- Counsellors through the IRSSA's Health Supports Program for the BC-Region**
1-877-477-0775; or
- an **Aboriginal Healing Foundation Project** in your area.

For more information, please contact:

Tsee'Tsee'Watul'Wit (Sharon Thira)
Indian Residential School Survivors Society
Phone: (604) 925-4464
Toll-free: 1-800-721-0066
Email: reception@irsss.ca
Website: www.irsss.ca



Trauma Responses

Did you know that after talking about residential school or even hearing other people talk about it could “trigger” you to have a trauma response?

Sometimes it takes only a smell, or a sound and you feel as if you’re right back there at the school.

Most times, people don’t even realize that they have been triggered.

They can’t understand why they are feeling the way they do all of a sudden.

On the following page is a list of things that might be letting you know that you are having a trauma response.

If you experience any of these responses to the point that they are interfering with your life, then you need to seek help.

Please call your local health worker or counsellor.



Trauma Responses

Physical:

- Tiredness
- Can't sleep (or sleeping too much)
- Stomach & bowel problems
- General body tension
- Change in appetite
- Change in sexual functioning

Spiritual:

- Loss of sense of self & self-esteem
- Questioning the meaning of life
- loss of sense of purpose
- Hopelessness
- Loss of motivation
- Anger at spiritual leaders or Creator

Behavioural:

- Impatient
- Unable to put up with other people's opinions that differ from one's own
- Irritable
- Withdrawn or clingy
- Moody
- Losing or misplacing things
- Shift towards a younger thinking or acting self
- Risky or self destructive behaviour
- Easily startled or frightened
- Avoiding people and thoughts of the trauma
- Avoidance by using drugs and alcohol

Mental:

- Horror
- Disbelief
- Can't concentrate
- Confusion, disorientation
- Spaciness
- Flashbacks; nightmares (bad dreams)
- Preoccupied with negative thoughts
- Can't stop thinking about the trauma
- Hindsight thinking of the trauma
- 'I/You must always be right thinking
- Self-doubt
- Can't work

Emotional:

- Emotional roller coaster (feeling up then down then back up again)
- Feeling sad or depressed
- Anxiety
- Fear
- Super-sensitive to noise & comments from others
- Sense of powerlessness
- Avoiding intimacy & closeness (sexual & relationship)
- Distrusting
- Feeling extremely lonely
- Unresolved anger (can lead to scapegoating, blaming)
- Numbness - having no feeling at all