



October 1, 2021
St. Thérèse of Lisieux

Update for the Diocese of Prince Albert on the Saskatchewan Bishops' Catholic TRC Healing Response Appeal

To All the Faithful in the Diocese of Prince Albert:

May the pure love of Christ reign in our hearts!

On July 3 and 13 this past summer the Catholic Bishops of Saskatchewan announced and launched “a new province-wide Appeal for Support of Healing and Reconciliation.” We pledged our financial commitment to initiatives in each of our Dioceses that would be determined in consultation with Indigenous peoples in the areas of: 1) healing and reconciliation; 2) cemeteries on the sites of former residential schools; and 3) educational and cultural support. A portal for donations was opened immediately through the Saskatoon Catholic Foundation and we noted that each individual Bishop would give further details to the people of his Diocese in September after consultation with the indigenous peoples in his area.

I want to thank those who have already donated to this new appeal from the Diocese of Prince Albert. I know as well that others are waiting to hear more details from me as to *where* and *how* the money will be spent before deciding to donate. In this letter, I will try to answer some of your questions and give you a status report for our Diocese.

Why should people in our Diocese contribute to a new fund for healing and reconciliation? Each year the Diocese of Prince Albert consecrates 5% of the Bishop's Annual Appeal to Indigenous Ministry. This money largely goes to support the ministry of priests, deacons, religious sisters in Catholic parishes on Indigenous lands. This ministry is not exclusively to Catholic Indigenous persons but is often aimed at supporting those connected already to the Church. This new appeal is a much-needed complement to the fundraising already going on in our Diocese because it seeks to help and heal relationships with Indigenous people who are estranged from the Church and are also grappling with the ongoing trauma and consequences of Indian Residential Schools. This new appeal will give our efforts at reconciliation a wider reach and, what is more, will be allocated through a broad consultation with Indigenous persons: Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and others. The questions I am and will be asking the survivors and communities affected by the Residential Schools relate to the three areas named above: what sort of concrete efforts are needed for healing and reconciliation? Can we help with the cemeteries connected to Residential Schools? What is needed for educational and cultural projects?

Where are we so far in this process? As your new Bishop, I have spent the last few months travelling to numerous parishes and communities in this Diocese. I have had wonderful encounters with many people, including many Indigenous persons, and I am arranging more. I do not think that I have been able to meet with enough Indigenous people yet to know what the priorities are for them. So, it is my goal to continue this conversation through the Fall. After Christmas, I will ‘launch’ the Catholic TRC Response more vigorously in our area when I have specific projects for our fundraising. People may still make donations before that time through this link should they wish: <https://dscf.ca/catholic-trc-healing-response/>.

On September 27, after our Apology to the Indigenous Peoples in these lands, the Bishops of Canada pledged to raise 30 million dollars towards such efforts through locally discerned projects and efforts like this Appeal in Saskatchewan. I am very pleased that eventually the monies raised here for specific healing projects will be counted as part of this national goal. No amount of money can simply heal the misdeeds of the past. We hope that this new communal effort to listen and work together will help non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples walk together with greater mutual respect and mutuality as equal partners and loving neighbours.

Sincerely in Christ,

Stephen A. Hero

✠ Most Rev. Stephen A. Hero
Bishop of Prince Albert