



21 April 2016

Dear Pastors, Pastoral Animators and Parishioners,

Over the past several days, there have been news items in the media concerning the financial commitment of Catholic entities in relation to the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement (IRSSA). In the interest of providing you with the facts as I believe them to be, I am sending you the following *Questions and Answers* sheet offered by the Corporation of Catholic Entities Party to the Indian Residential School Settlement (CCEPIRSS), of which I am the chair of the Board.

Most Rev. Gerard Pettipas, C.Ss.R.
Archbishop of Grouard-McLennan

Questions and Responses Related to Recent Media Coverage on Catholic Entity Commitments in the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement

Why is the Catholic Church refusing to live up to its commitments to First Nations survivors of Indian Residential Schools?

What we are talking about here is an unsuccessful campaign and no Catholic Entity walking away from their responsibilities or commitments. The reason the fundraising campaign was identified as a “best efforts” campaign in 2006, is because it was to be a part of a good faith engagement by the entities in support of the process of healing and reconciliation with survivors, their families and their community.

All participants in the agreement including Canada’s representative, Justice Iacobucci, knew that the campaign’s success would be dependent on its ability to engage a very broad and diverse network of support and that is what the campaign set out to do. The shortfall of the campaign is not an indication of either bad faith or less than best efforts. It is an indication of the work that has to be done to build a broad base of understanding.

Is it true as reported by the Globe and Mail, that the Federal Government could not force the Catholics to honour their engagements because of a legal misstep?

The Catholic Entities party to the Settlement Agreement honoured all their undertakings financially or otherwise under the terms of the IRS Settlement Agreement, and in a proactive way.

Senior Government officials were included in conversations dealing with the fundraising plan as designed by the fundraising firm. In addition the Government of Canada was informed on a yearly basis of the financial status of the fundraising campaign. Yearly financial statements were provided to the Senior officials of the Federal Government and additional information was provided through meetings held in Ottawa. The status of the campaign was well known so it is difficult to understand what it is represented that there was a misstep which would have taken place.

The Globe and Mail article claims that there was no national drive for parishioner contribution. Why did that not happen?

This claim is in fact wrong. A Pew Collection in parishes across the country was held on December 08, 2013 and the Federal Government was informed of such an initiative.

Background

In order to bring their best efforts to the campaign the Catholic entities engaged the advice and services of a leading national fundraising firm. They structured the campaign according to a strategy used for a large project such as a hospital or a university.

The logic of such a campaign is to focus first on the larger contributions in order to build momentum before appealing to the “person in the pew” and that was in fact done.

The campaign targeted two categories of larger donors:

1. Catholic organizations that were not part of the settlement agreement: The response to this part of the campaign was the most successful and in fact represents the largest part of the final tally of donations.
2. Corporations that would want to be part of the work of reconciliation: This proved to be the greatest challenge. The professional and volunteer effort that went into this phase was huge. The gain for the campaign was negligible and no momentum was gained during years 2011 and following.

Thereafter early in 2013, a planning and preparation phase related to the pew collection portion of the campaign was launched and built with parish based promotions to an outstanding period of individual solicitation of Catholic parishioners, through a collection held on December 08, 2013.

The pew collection along with some contributions that followed raised approximately \$1M.

There were variables that complicated the campaign including:

- a. The perception that the campaign was an effort by the official church to have the average Catholic pay for their transgressions.
- b. The collection landed one week after the major emergency collection following a hurricane in the Philippines.
- c. The dominant daily campaign by the government of the day to promote the idea that the indigenous communities were receiving too much money and that the problem was first nations corruption and unaccountability.

The lack of success of the campaign is not reflective of the good faith of the entities or of their best efforts – the Catholics contributed but with small amounts.

How can you claim that the Catholic Church has made best efforts when the campaign failed so miserably?

From the beginning all parties recognized that the success of the campaign was subject to forces that the 50 Catholic entities could not control. The fundraising goal was a way to engage the community beyond those who were part of the settlement and Canada’s representative Justice Iacobucci had been repeatedly warned of the foreseeable difficulties to be encountered but Canada did insist that there be a best efforts undertaking which in fact did take place during the 7 years of the campaign.

The entities did so by financing the organization and promotion of the fund raising activities.

They contracted with a major professional fund raising firm. They solicited prominent individuals as Board members including former AFN National Chief Phil Fontaine who served as

chair of the Board and Mary Simon, a prominent Inuit leader, a former senior official from the Government of Canada and others who would provide leadership and profile to the campaign. Having established a fundraising plan, the Catholic leaders put effort behind each part of it and while disappointed by the result can say without doubt that they did their best over a prolonged period of time.

How come the Catholic Church does not intend to honour its legal if not moral engagements under the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement with Canada?

The legal obligation of individual Catholic Entities is clearly set out in the settlement agreement, which involves the 50 Catholic Entities involved in the settlement and no one is contesting that it has been fulfilled.

Response to the moral obligation goes beyond the involved entities and cannot be reduced to a financial commitment; as a matter unknown to the public and the media, the in-kind services and programs provided individually by the Catholic Entities did total close to 30 million \$ of community work in less than 7 years when the initial and legal undertaking was 25 million \$ within 10 years, ending in 2017. And the good work is still ongoing notwithstanding that legal in-kind obligations have been met

Did your Diocese participate financially to the Catholic campaign?

We did contribute to the Catholic Moving Forward Campaign by participating in the pew collection and proceeds were transferred to the MFT funds.

What were the financial undertakings of the Catholic Church?

The Catholic Church has never been a party to the Settlement Agreement but 50 Catholic Entities party to the settlement agreement have contributed to finance services and programs to the First Nations survivors, families and communities:

1. they paid over \$29 million in cash which was directed to programs and services under the supervision of First Nations organizations;
2. another set of community services and programs worth more than \$25 million were organized through Catholic Entities individual leadership;
3. Two million dollars were put up by the same Catholic Entities to organize and to promote the Catholic Moving Forward Together campaign in almost every region of Canada. Unfortunately the response from large corporations and individuals has been weak and totaled \$4 million which has been financing services and programs to survivors, families and communities.

Why not another fund raising with Catholic parishioners?

The moral and legal obligations have been met in good faith – a large number of healing and reconciliation initiatives did take place since 2004 and First Nations have been able to follow the initiatives of the 50 Catholic Entities through some of their most distinguished leaders, such as AFN National Chief Phil Fontaine who chaired the fund raising campaign during more than 7 years, participating actively to get monies from large Canadian corporations from Vancouver to Halifax.

Because the efforts have been made and that reconciliation efforts are now made locally through every Diocese associated with First Nations, in order to provide assistance of different kinds to survivors, their families and communities, the moral obligations are being currently met on an almost daily basis.