



## ***Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon*** **OFFICE OF THE BISHOP**

123 Nelson Rd  
Saskatoon SK S7S 1H1  
www.saskatoonrcdiocese.com

Phone: 306-242-1500  
Fax: 306-244-6010  
Toll free: 877-661-5005



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Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

As part of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that was held in Saskatoon in June 2012, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon stated its commitment to form a Diocesan Council for Truth and Reconciliation (DCTR). The DCTR was formed that Autumn, bringing together Catholic First Nations and Metis Elders and leaders, and those in diocesan leadership positions, including myself. Our mandate is “to provide a forum for listening and sharing, through stories and prayer; to collaborate with the diocese toward building and strengthening relationships; and to support healing from the Indian Residential School experience”. Our Goal is “to raise awareness throughout the diocese about injustice issues, and barriers to reconciliation, and to discern a way to walk together on a path of understanding, education and action, fostering relationships in light of the Gospel.”

Since the publication of the March 2014 parliamentary report on the status of missing women, [Invisible Women: A Call to Action](#), we have been discussing the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women. Nearly 1,200 Aboriginal women have been murdered or are missing over the past 30 years, according to police records. This issue does not affect only Aboriginal women but all Canadians; all people. Something has gone dreadfully wrong, and the pain and suffering of the Aboriginal families and communities who have lost loved ones calls out for a response.

In Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, he writes, ‘God has put the body together, giving greater honour to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it’ (12:24-25). This same idea is found in traditional Aboriginal ethics when it is said, ‘The hurt of one is the hurt of all.’ We are also mindful that the residential school system has played a part in the present struggles of Aboriginal people.

Like the residential schools, missing and murdered Aboriginal women point to a systemic problem, and we have a desire to walk and work together towards a systemic response which will make our communities healthier and safer, for Aboriginal women and for all of us. That being said, it is not clear or obvious to us on the DCTR how best to heal the pain or improve the situation. What has become clear to us is that we need to listen more closely to the voices of the survivors and family members of the women lost to us; and we need to walk with their communities as they seek to name underlying problems and to take steps towards healing the brokenness that has allowed this tragedy to systematically continue. We all need to be more aware of what we have done and what we have failed to do.

 In all things we are *rooted in Christ*,  
in His desire to bring God’s love to all peoples.

To that end, we have been encouraged to work with other faith communities in organizing a day early in the new year which would gather us together to listen to the stories of some in our communities who have suffered through the experience of missing or murdered sisters and daughters; to hear from those who walk with the most vulnerable in our midst today; to listen to various voices and proposals suggesting a way forward; and to begin to discern what steps we might take as we learn to walk together in solidarity and friendship. Education, awareness and empathy are crucial to understanding the situation of and discerning our role in partnering with all those who seek justice and yearn for dignity for our lost daughters, sisters, mothers, and kokums.

One step we can take at the present moment is to become better informed about the situation, and the *Invisible Women* document is a good place to start. Another thing we can do is to lift prayers in our parishes for those in our communities with the grief of murdered family members and the deep suffering of those whose sisters and daughters remain missing.

Within the next month, the Diocesan Council for Truth and Reconciliation hopes to be able to announce the date and location of the forthcoming day of study and reflection, and to invite your participation in that day.

Yours in Christ,



† Donald Bolen  
Diocese of Saskatoon