

Pope Francis should apologize to Indigenous Canadians

It's disappointing and more than a little puzzling to learn Pope Francis will not apologize for the Roman Catholic Church's role in Canada's residential school tragedy.

It's disappointing because so many of the First Nations, Métis and Inuit survivors of those misguided, destructive institutions sincerely want to hear an official statement of regret from the leader of the world's 1.2 billion Catholics.

It's also disappointing because one of the 94 recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, after it spent five years examining the residential school disaster, specifically called for a papal apology delivered on Canadian soil.

Indeed, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau personally asked the Pope to consider this gesture when they met in the Vatican last year. But two weeks ago, the unwelcome answer was no.

The residential schools are a black mark on the history of the Canadian government but also some of Canada's most prominent churches.

For more than a century, the federal government's church-operated residential schools worked tirelessly to assimilate Indigenous children by forcing them to attend schools where they were forbidden to speak their languages or practise their cultures.

More than 150,000 Indigenous youth attended the schools, beginning in the 1880s, and many suffered physical, sexual and psychological abuse at the hands of priests, nuns or other teachers.

Irreparable harm was done - to individuals, families and Indigenous communities across the land.

The Canadian government as well as the United, Anglican and Presbyterian churches all apologized long ago for their part in this outrage.

While Roman Catholic organizations have, over the years, issued apologies for their role in the residential schools, it isn't the authoritative and definitive statement from the Pope that Indigenous Canadians seek. The argument from bishops has always been that 16 out of 70 Catholic dioceses, along with three dozen religious communities, were associated with the residential schools.

Because each diocese and religious community is legally responsible for its actions, the bishops insist the Catholic Church as a whole is not responsible and should not apologize.

Such stubbornness is also puzzling. In 2010, a papal apology was issued to those in Ireland who had been sexually abused by priests. Two years ago, Pope Francis visited Bolivia where he issued an apology for the "grave sins" of the Church against Indigenous Peoples in the colonization of the Americas.

We hope these precedents will allow this popular Pope, who is famed for his thoughtful compassion, to reconsider his decision, come to Canada and say what needs to be said.

"Forgive us our debts," is part of Christianity's greatest prayer. The Catholic Church has a debt owing to Canada's Indigenous Peoples and should seek their forgiveness.

CHAMPION TRACKS



Meisner family photo

Stephen and Lonni Meisner and their children Alexander, David and Jenay have some fun in the sun in Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic with a copy of their favourite community newspaper. Going away? Pack a copy of the Champion in your suitcase, snap a creative photo and email your Champion Tracks submission to cohara@metroland.com. Please include everyone's name and destination information.

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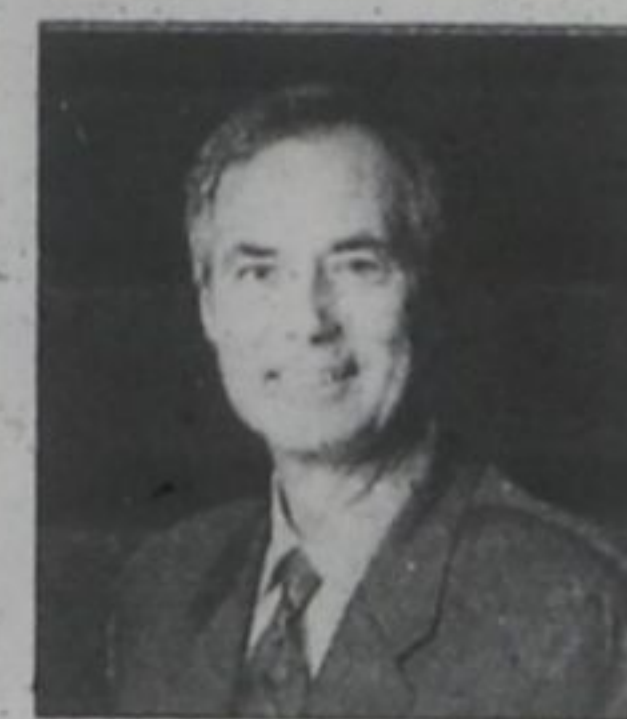
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Changes to Halton recycling now in effect

Plastic bags, packaging can be recycled:
Carr



GARY CARR
Column

Over the years we have made significant investments in waste management including waste reduction technology and improving our curbside collection services such as the blue box and green cart programs.

We have also seen a real commitment from residents to reduce household and community waste through increasing participation rates and the useful feedback provided on our programs and services. A common theme

among residents is the amount of recyclables that become windblown litter on windy days and unacceptable plastic materials.

I am pleased to share that all Halton residents, businesses and facilities can now include plastic bags and plastic overwrap in their recycling. This means everything from plastic shopping bags to packaging around bath-

room tissue and newspaper bags can be placed in the recycling and diverted from the Halton Waste Management Site (HWMS) landfill. In addition, to reduce litter on windy days, residents in single family households have the option to place recyclables in clear plastic bags for curbside collection. Residents can continue to use the blue box only, or use a combination of both - whatever works best for your household. We are always looking for ways to improve our waste diversion rates and ensuring that we are providing the best possible customer service. And, thanks to resident commitment to waste reduction, Halton Region has one of

the highest blue box participation rates across the province and 90 per cent of blue box material collected in Halton is sold and recycled into new products. Together, we have also extended the lifespan of the HWMS from 2012 to 2044 - more than 30 years longer than expected!

Enhancements and service improvements like these and your continued participation in waste management services keep Halton a great place to live, work, raise a family and retire.

To find more information, recycling tips and a list of acceptable materials please visit halton.ca/bluebox, download the OneHalton app or call 311.

- Gary Carr is regional chair of Halton Region.

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