

National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation visits Ohsweken

By Jim Windle

SIX NATIONS – The truth is out, now the question of reconciliation has arisen and people are discussing what that means moving forward. The next phase in the Truth and Reconciliation Committee's process is to try to ensure recommendations from the TRC report are fairly considered and concrete steps are made to find true reconciliation for thousands of First Nations men and women who have been carrying the scars of the residential school experience since childhood.

Ry Moran, director of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation was at the Six Nations Community Hall on Tuesday November 10th to explain the next phase of the process and to gather input from those affected by Canada's genocide against indigenous culture, language and customs through residential schools.

In 1996, a 4000 page Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples set out a 20 year agenda for implementing changes. The commissioners of this report concluded that "there cannot be peace or harmony unless there is justice."

The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation is based out of the University of Manitoba with affiliated partners across Canada. It is to be the permanent home for all statements, documents and other materials gathered by the TRC of Canada.

The questions being asked of survivors and their relatives is how to make some this material available to the public and to history.

"It's more than just an archive of materials gathered through the TRC mandate, it is critical that we share this information with educators and to work directly with them to ensure that the curriculums are appropriate and robust," explains Moran. "We also wish to continue to explore and examine this history that we have, both in terms of where we were, and where we are going."

Ongoing study of this long and complex history is a very important ele-



Ry Moran, director of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, was at the Six Nations Community Hall on Tuesday to explain and to receive input on the new Centre, which will house information, personal stories, documents and pictures gathered from across Canada by the Truth and Reconciliation Committee. PHOTO BY JIM WINDLE

ment to develop as well, according to Moran.

"The purpose of these community engagements sessions is to give community members the opportunity to learn more about the Centre," he explains. "Through the settlement agreement processes, there have been many programs started and it's essential that people know about this next phase of their journey."

"It's important for us that we be out in community and building that relationship, and that community members feel empowered to share their voices with us," he adds. "We also need to explore that fine balance between what is available on the public website versus what needs to be protected out of these collections of millions of documents."

The collection is such that, if you or a family member have gone to a residential school, the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation will have a record of that.

"It's really important in the sharing of this information that we strike that balance," underscores Moran.

The official website for the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation was just launched last week on a fairly conservative basis and will be added to as years go by as a repository for all info regarding the residential school system and individual stories of abuse within

that system.

Hopefully in time and with the permission of the families involved, more of these files will be opened to the public.

Although the NCTR was in the planning stages for a long time under the Harper Conservatives, now that it is time to launch it, under a much more conciliatory Liberal government, Moran is optimistic that resistance to making this information public will be much less from Trudeau's Liberals.

"I think what we are seeing with the federal Liberal government and

even with the NDP government is a recognition that the work of the TRC was groundbreaking for the entire country. In that, there is hope that the call for action will not fall on deaf ears."

National Centre for

Truth and Reconciliation has released its 11-page call to action, to help keep these and other indigenous issues on the front burner as the new Liberal government gets settled. Among other things, the timely implementation of the United

Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is paramount in the Call to Action document.

For more information go to umanitoba.ca/nctr, or email to NCTR@umanitoba.ca.