

Anglicans finally release Mush Hole documents, but too late

By Jim Windle
EAGLES NEST

After more than 10 years of gathering important and potentially revealing documents from some of the residential schools under the auspices of the Huron Diocese of the Anglican Church of Canada, thousands of documents relative to the residential schools have finally been released, including those from the Mohawk Institute, better known as "the Mush Hole" by those unfortunates who attended.

During the Strengthening Survivor's Connections gathering last week at the Six Nations Community Hall, former Mohawk Chapel curator Liona Moses announced that the Diocese had contacted her to advise her that they were finally releasing the documents to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

That may have been good news 10 years ago, or even five, but now, only weeks away from the TRC's deadline on applications for compensation, it will be too late for some. Others have literally died waiting.

Many survivors have been rejected by the commission because there has been no record of them attending any of the schools. Others have not filed because they can not prove they attended.

These newly released documents may provide that kind of vital information in the form of student roll calls or release forms filled out by unwitting parents under the mistaken belief they were sending their children to the school for a "proper" education. Even names mentioned on other reports could qualify them for payment, but without an extension of the deadline, they will be flat out of luck.

"I would strongly recommend the TRC extend the deadline for registering in light of these documents being released," says Moses. "I have no idea why they have held them for so long. I am hoping they (TRC) will do the right thing and extend that deadline."

We contacted the Diocese to speak with Bishop

Bob Bennett or Bishop Terry Dance about the documents release, but neither were available for comment. However, Media Relations Officer for the Diocese, Rev. Keith Nethery did return our call.

"We are in the process of releasing to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission 21 boxes of documents from our archives relative to the residential schools," said Rev. Nethery. "They will be released to the TRC seven boxes at a time, digitized and returned to us."

According to Rev. Nethery, the Commission was to



Wendy Fletcher

have paid for the digitizing of the documents, but ran out of money for that so the duty was downloaded onto the Church to have done and pay for it.

He called it, "quite an involved process which has taken over 1,000 person hours to prepare."

"Each shipment of boxes will take 4-5 weeks to digitize each page and return the documents before the next set of seven boxes is sent," says Rev. Nethery.

He says that he does not know when the first set of boxes was sent nor when the process will be complete, however, he confirms that all existing documents are to be released.

Tekawennake published a four part series called "Un-godly Alliance" in 2010 which included excerpts from several interviews with lead Anglican historian and researcher Wendy Fletcher and interviews with Liona Moses who helped her for

a while.

At the time both Fletcher and Moses spoke of a 10 year gag order put on the researchers not to reveal or make public in any way the content of the documents they were commissioned to gather from mainly the Mohawk Institute and a second school in Northern Ontario.

But when asked about the gag order, Rev. Nethery, told Tekawennake, "To the best of my knowledge that is patently untrue. There was no order in that regard as far as I know."

However, Fletcher was quite specific about that gag order being the main reason she left the Huron Diocese along with her husband and moved to British Columbia where she eventually took a job as Principal and Dean of the Vancouver School of Theology.

Also at that time, Moses told Tekawennake that former Bishop, Bruce Howe, placed a 10 year gag order on all of those involved in the internal investigation and she has not wavered from that.

This was later corroborated again by Fletcher as fact, yet Rev. Nethery still denies it to be true.

In the spring of 2010, Moses was tired of waiting for her church leadership to do the right thing and make public the documents she knew existed, and gave the Diocese until a certain date to come clean or she would go to the media.

When that deadline came and went, she contacted this reporter to tell her story.

We are re-posting that entire four part series on our free e-edition at www.teka-news.com.

"I have a PHD in history. I have studied Canadian history extensively, but I never heard anything about residential schools, except that they existed," says Fletcher. "My investigation into the Mohawk residential school opened me up to this history and the myth of who we are as Canadians."

Fletcher has since relinquished her role as Principal and Dean at the school as of July 2, 2012, to return to her first love which is teaching, as Professor of the History of Christianity at the same school.



Liona Moses