

Theorizing Political Forgiveness: An Unexpected Response to Apology

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Abstract

In 2008, Prime Minister Harper stated: “the Government of Canada sincerely apologizes and asks the forgiveness of the Aboriginal peoples of this country for failing them so profoundly” in relation to the Indian Residential Schools. Aboriginal leaders thanked the Prime Minister for the apology, yet, they also made clear that the actions of the state during the time of the Schools and afterward have not been resolved. This paper develops and argues for the concept of political forgiveness that would take into consideration the need for the state to incorporate elements of redistributive justice and make space for hearing Aboriginal demands borne of anger and resentment building from the colonial legacy before and beyond the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Specifically, there is a need for a concept of political forgiveness in that current theorizing focuses primarily on forgiveness as a private matter and as a normative act of benefit to individuals and society. Absent from these interventions are Aboriginal concepts of forgiveness as well as the change in the scale and dimension of forgiveness when requested publicly, of a specific group, within a historical context of ongoing devaluation of Aboriginal peoples, violation of treaties, and social and economic inequalities. To make apology and forgiveness meaningful, responses from the population to whom apology is directed as well as the state response, not just in the form of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, need to be considered. I locate this proposal within ongoing Aboriginal demands of the state and social justice.

“If reconciliation for Aboriginal people in Canada is ever going to move beyond rhetoric, reconciliation discussion must include substantive societal and structural changes that deal with power imbalances, land and resources.” – Val Napoleon¹

In 2008, Prime Minister Stephen Harper offered an apology for the Indian Residential Schools and asked for forgiveness from Canada’s Aboriginal peoples and directed this statement in the House of Commons to their representatives, unprecedentedly seated on the Chamber floor.

“Mr. Speaker, I stand before you today to offer an apology to former students of Indian residential schools.”

“The treatment of children in Indian residential schools is a sad chapter in our history.”

“Today, we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country.”

“The government now recognizes that the consequences of the Indian residential schools policy were profoundly negative and that this policy has had a lasting and damaging impact on Aboriginal culture, heritage and language. While some former students have spoken positively about their experiences at residential schools, these stories are far overshadowed by tragic accounts of the emotional, physical and sexual abuse and neglect of helpless children, and their separation from powerless families and communities.”

The Government of Canada sincerely apologizes and asks the forgiveness of the Aboriginal peoples of this country for failing them so profoundly.²

Importantly, for two years the request had not yet been answered. None of the First Nations representatives explicitly expressed forgiveness when the apology was delivered. As well, there was no clear sign of a verbal affirmation or physical handshake or embrace that conventionally signifies a degree of forgiveness. The closest sign of forgiveness came from Clem Chartier, President of the Métis National Council, who said in his statement that the apology “has been a long time coming, but it has been well received.”³ The remaining representatives spoke of the importance of the apology. Chief Phil Fontaine, National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, said “the apology is momentous.”⁴ Patrick Brazeau, National Chief of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, stated that the apology “is a positive step forward in the history of this great country of ours.”⁵ Mary Simon, President Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, stated “a new day has dawned.”⁶ Beverley Jacobs, President of the Native Women’s Association, stated: “We have given thanks to you for your apology. I have to also give you credit for standing up. I did not see any other governments before today come forward and apologize, so I do thank you for that.”⁷ All but Fontaine thanked the Prime Minister. All but Brazeau referred to demands still to be negotiated between Aboriginal peoples and the federal government.

With the exception of Brazeau, Aboriginal, Inuit, and Métis leaders expressed a guarded and vigilant stance in response to Harper’s statement of apology that they connected the occasion to Canada’s colonial history. Fontaine stated that “brave survivors...have stripped white supremacy of its authority and legitimacy,” and continued later in his response that “there are still many fights to be fought.”⁸ Chartier said “I also feel deeply conflicted because there is still misunderstanding about the situation of the Métis Nation, our history and our contemporary situation.”⁹ Jacobs said that Aboriginal women and men want respect, respect and honour that have been systematically taken away through past federal programs like the Indian Residential Schools. In particular, Jacobs noted:

Women have taken the brunt of it [colonization] all. ... What is going to be provided? That is my question. I know that this is the question from all of us. That is what we would like to continue to work on, in partnership.¹⁰

Two years later in 2010, the exchange was partially completed by a group different from the representatives on the floor of the House of Commons, the Gathering of Nations International. Led by Chief Kenny Blacksmith, a residential school survivor and past Deputy Grand Chief of the Grand Council of the Crees of Quebec, their “Journey of Freedom” to bring a healing message of forgiveness, hope and freedom to Aboriginal Canadians culminated in a National Forgiven Summit June 11-13, 2010 in Ottawa, two days before the first TRC national event in The Forks, Winnipeg, Manitoba. Blacksmith felt a responsibility to forgive: “at that moment [of Harper’s apology], the onus was placed on our people as individuals to respond.”¹¹ The National Forgiven Summit was neither publicly acknowledged nor supported by the First Nations representatives who received Mr. Harper’s apology or on their respective websites (**need to do more research, here**).

In asking for forgiveness upon delivering the apology, the Government of Canada is requesting an extraordinary exchange. I have argued elsewhere that there is a risk the state presents the apology and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, together, as enough for the state and non-Aboriginal population to relieve itself of further consideration of the intergenerational legacy of the Residential Schools, and in-depth examination of the colonial relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the state as well as with the non-Aboriginal population. The problem with this exchange is that forgiveness is cheaply purchased and coerced because the onus is on Aboriginal peoples to forgive without adequate consideration of their economic and social well-being in relation to Canada’s colonial legacy of which the Residential Schools were only one significant part. It also risks an acceptance of a divide between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples and the historical injustices of a settler state and society toward Aboriginal peoples.¹² Finally, it potentially weakens the meaning of reconciliation; while forgiveness is an important part of reconciliation, the current meaning of forgiveness implicit in reconciliation risks overemphasizing a narrow understanding of the ethical versus the political. A narrow focus on the ethical put the onus on the wronged having to forgive, largely for their own benefit. In particular, current theorizing focuses primarily on forgiveness as a private matter and as a normative act of benefit to Aboriginals. In this view, the non-Aboriginal population becomes largely invisible and in that invisibility, its roles and obligations remain obscure. In contrast to this more narrow view, the political would include an ethical dimension whereby non-Aboriginals would have responsibilities in the process of forgiveness and the state would need to address the intergenerational socio-economic consequences that arose with the Residential School system. For a more satisfactory resolution of the legacy of the Residential Schools to occur, I argue for a concept of political forgiveness that would take into consideration the possible actions of the non-Aboriginal population in reconciliation processes and the need for the state to incorporate elements of Aboriginal relationship building and redistributive justice. Largely absent from the current process of reconciliation is consideration of the scale and dimension of forgiveness when requested publicly, of a specific group, within a historical context of ongoing devaluation of Aboriginal peoples, violation of treaties, and social and economic inequalities. Also largely absent from these interventions, especially outside of the multiple spaces of Commission, are Aboriginal concepts of relationship building that would include restoring relations with non-Aboriginal peoples where there has been conflict and violence. To make apology and forgiveness meaningful, what Aboriginal

peoples need from non-Aboriginal peoples, not just in the form of the TRC, need to be considered.

Minow presents the currently authoritative position that forgiveness is a desirable response to injury on a large societal scale. Institutional instruments of forgiveness have in common the need to act and not do nothing, whether as commissions of inquiry, commissions aimed at reconciliation, or public monuments.¹³ Minow's goal is to develop "a vocabulary for assessing the goals and limitations of each kind of response to societal level atrocities."¹⁴ This goal points to an imagined solution that directly resolves the issue in the future. She soberly acknowledges that, based on personal narratives of victims, such a completed reconciliation at a national level has the resonance of impossibility: "there is in these stories a lack of closure, and the impossibility of balance and satisfaction, in the face of incomprehensible human violence."¹⁵ Yet, forgive, one must. The key tenets of forgiveness, while not explicitly constituting a normative program, implicitly take on a forcefully normative character. Minow writes:

The victim should not seek revenge and become a new victimizer but instead should forgive the offender and end the cycle of offense. When we have been injured by another's offense, we should seek to reconnect and recognize the common humanity of the other, and grant forgiveness to underscore and strengthen our commonality. Through forgiveness, we can renounce resentment, and avoid the self-destructive effects of holding on to pain, grudges, and victimhood. The act of forgiving can reconnect the offender and the victim and establish or renew a relationship; it can heal grief; forge new, constructive alliances; and break cycles of violence.¹⁶

Here, the emphasis is on the individual who is or ought to be predisposed to making the emotional change in oneself toward one's perpetrator. One reason for forgiving one's perpetrator includes not wanting to become a bitter and resentful person. In this case, forgiveness facilitates freedom within the individual, a release from the pain and trauma that enables one to move on and live in the world without grudges or hatred. Archbishop Desmond Tutu writes that forgiveness is "the best form of self-interest" because it enables people "to survive and emerge still human despite all efforts to dehumanize them."¹⁷ What enables this survival and humanity is a spirit transcendent of the bodily world. This religious aspect emerges at the invocation of forgiveness and it can become a natural given or take on a coercive character when there is an expectation for forgiveness especially without satisfactory redress or attention to the demands of the population in question. Numerous benefits associated with forgiveness appear to occur *naturally*, in Minow's view. She writes that "such reconciliation would assist stability, and democracy," but does not elaborate how this would come about.¹⁸

Another reason for forgiving is to interrupt the violence of the wrong and assert the capacity of victims as agents.¹⁹ Arendt inspires this meaning of forgiveness. Norlock and Rumsey, drawing upon Arendt, suggest that forgiveness can stop the consequences of others' actions that create injury. Not to forgive would create the possibility of continuous victimhood that would also be the further victimizing actions of victims themselves. The ongoing consequences of such a mantle would be implicitly self-undermining from this view. There also comes a time to let go of a wide range of emotions toward one's perpetrator and consequences sourced from the injustice so that

one can move forward in one's life in an empowered way. An apology can particularly facilitate this letting go. Where there has been apology, there can be acceptance of the apology in a forgiving way that puts the incident in question in the past. There could be a generosity toward the perpetrator, a compassionate concern, especially if facilitated by knowledge of their own context that would provide some understanding for their actions, as well as their human vulnerabilities.

If forgiveness is viewed on a continuum where the above discussion sits on one end of the continuum, there is another end where forgiveness is impossible. Arendt finds herself on both sides of the continuum. Where on the one hand, forgiveness for Arendt can create individual and social reprieve for victims as well as capacity-building for renewed agency in public life, on the other hand, she stakes out territory where forgiveness ought to be withheld. For Arendt, "men are unable to forgive what they cannot punish and unable to punish what has turned out to be unforgivable."²⁰ And, when forgiveness is solicited without consideration to the fullness of reconciliation sought on the part of those wronged, it can become all the more coercive in a normalizing way. Derrida sums this up as follows:

Each time forgiveness is at the service of a finality (atonement, redemption, salvation), each time that it aims to re-establish a normality (social, national, political, psychological) by a work of mourning, by some therapy or ecology of memory, then the 'forgiveness' is not pure – nor is its concept. Forgiveness is not, it *should not be*, normal, normative, normalizing.²¹

Under a normalizing imperative, the cost to victims includes exacerbated injury in what they feel is a false reconciliation, continued fear and threat to their security, and continued sense of injustice with impunity. Further, much of this injury, fear, insecurity and injustice remain largely invisible to the non-injured population.

Even while recognizing the normalizing dimension of forgiveness, accepting that forgiveness ought to be withheld in the face of extraordinary wrongs, even respecting the victim's choice not to forgive, there is the assumption that forgiveness will occur in time, and so, the question of *how* to forgive emerges. This could be pursued via cultural, religious, spiritual practices. Yet, again, the onus is on the wronged to forgive.

In addressing the 39th General Synod of the Anglican Church in 2010, TRC Commissioner Marie Wilson said: "accept you may not get forgiveness...in spite of your heartfelt apology as a church...Forgiveness and reconciliation are not the same thing."²² And, at the same time, they are interrelated. Indeed, at a political level, perhaps they need to be thought together for a stronger meaning of reconciliation. Reconciliation comprises many aspects. The many meanings of reconciliation suggest it is a context-relevant concept requiring attention to the specificity of situation addressed and peoples concerned. Literature on reconciliation in transitional societies speaks of reconciliation as relationship building not haunted by past conflict and hatred²³ and requiring trust and cohesion.²⁴ Reconciliation as relationship building also appears in the context of jurisprudence.²⁵ In the instance of Canada's TRC, the Commission Chair Justice Sinclair has announced that the Commission will define for itself what it means by reconciliation, drawing upon experts, Indian Residential School survivors, scholars, and Aboriginal elders. More recently, Justice Sinclair has said reconciliation needs to occur first among survivors and their families before moving forward to reconciliation with other elements

of Canadian society.²⁶ This suggests that survivors and their families continue to process the full meaning and experience of the Residential Schools for themselves, as a people, and for the non-Aboriginal population. From this examination and reflection, more concrete needs would emerge; needs that could be presented during or before the close of the Commission's mandate and hopefully negotiated with at least some success with the state.

While reconciliation is not specifically defined by the TRC, there is a sense of what it would need to include in terms of relationship and in light of past demands from Aboriginal peoples. Aboriginal peoples are in a relationship with the state and the non-Aboriginal population legally as well as within civil society. The restoration of relationship of Aboriginal peoples with the state where the Residential Schools are concerned has been outlined through the Common Experience Payment, Prime Minister Harper's apology, and the Commission. While these state actions go a ways toward recognizing the wrongdoing of the Residential Schools and the harm they caused for individuals, for peoples, and Aboriginal cultures, they address only one part of the relationship, a part that aggregates Aboriginal peoples as a collective and the non-Aboriginal population as a collective symbolized by the state. These avenues of address have been partial with their own problems that I will not go into here.²⁷ There is also the relationship of survivors with themselves in understanding the impact the Schools had on them as well as the relationship with their families. Indeed, the Commission events are important spaces for the families of survivors to learn what happened in the schools since survivors themselves have often been silent on their experiences. Another part of the relationship is that having to do with the non-Aboriginal population.

Discussion of reconciliation and forgiveness largely occurs within the framework of two discrete parties. There are the wronged and the wrongdoers; in this case, there are the Indian Residential School Survivors and the state at the time, plus narrow references to the values then held by society and the state that would have enabled the wrong to occur. Timewise, the wrong acts take place within a specified time period; during the period of the 19th century up until the last Residential School's closing in 1996. The period of redress also takes place within a specified time period: the Common Experience Payment has a time limit as does the mandate of the Commission. From the literature, the wrongdoer ideally recognizes the large role they have in the conflict, hatred, and violence and takes significant action toward righting the wrong. For example, in one moving story told by Laurence Thomas, a man who committed rape not only apologizes in writing to his victim, he also sets up a foundation that for the past decade educates men of sexist attitudes towards women, of their vulnerability and the connection to violence against women, and opens each meeting with his account of his crime and his transformation. Thomas states that in light of the man's actions, it would be "a majestic instance of forgiveness and righteousness" for the woman to forgive him.²⁸ The representation of the wrongdoer in this example is one whose actions have redeemed himself sufficiently in relation to his wrongdoing. The rape survivor can clearly see his personal labour, commitment, and transformation and in the institution he has founded and developed. There is a direct response and action on the part of the wrongdoer to his past crime.

In the context of the Indian Residential Schools, this framing has significant limits. It may occur in specific instances where IRS staff (who did and did not commit wrongs) and survivors reconnect, reconcile, and forgive; it may occur at the Commission

national events or local meetings of reconciliation organized by the involved churches. However, it is not a systematic undertaking to bring survivors and perpetrators into such close proximity where they can face one another in light of the Commission's mandate. Missing from the relationship are non-Aboriginal peoples and perpetrators. Yes, the state has provided some financial compensation, an apology, and a Commission that will have the legacy of a national research centre on the Schools. Yes, all Canadians are encouraged and invited to attend the Commission's national events, local meetings sponsored by the Churches, and community events. Yet, the actions of non-Aboriginal population and perpetrators are voluntary. Of course, every relationship of reconciliation and forgiveness that occurs for specific survivors and perpetrators is significant and can create lasting benefits and opportunities for both parties. These stories have started to emerge and will continue to surface over time as the Commission events take place. Yet, at a societal level, the issue of wrongdoing remains because the colonial legacy continues in the form of a colonialist belief system that underwrites Canada's integral institutions that govern the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the state. The Indian Residential Schools and the perpetrators of specific violence toward survivors can be contained to a time period. Yet, the colonialist values that informed the Schools, the state's treatment of Aboriginal peoples, the socio-economic condition of Aboriginal peoples, as well as societal beliefs toward Aboriginal peoples remain relevant in everyday life and for relationship building for reconciliation.

(Too) simply stated in this draft of the paper, a couple of the sources of wrongdoing giving rise to the Indian Residential Schools had in large part to do with the belief in white settler superiority combined with the concept of economic prosperity linked to the dispossession of land from Aboriginal peoples. For relationship building of trust and cohesion to occur, for Aboriginal peoples, one could imagine that address of these beliefs with meaningful action would go a long way. The Commission does not have the specific mandate to examine these sources, although it could include them in its publications and statements. To date, the Commission appears to emphasize personal healing and opportunities to bring survivors, their families, and allies together for a deeper understanding and witnessing of the experiences of the Schools from the survivors and families' accounts. Justice Sinclair's comments of eventual reconciliation between survivors and their families with the state could be construed to allude to the future address of Canada's colonial legacy. In the meantime, it would appear that the non-Aboriginal population would need to identify itself as having a role in the process of forgiveness and reconciliation with Aboriginal peoples.

Using the relationship of wronged and wrongdoer as a frame or model of reconciliation between Aboriginal peoples and the non-Aboriginal population, some onus would have to be put on the non-Aboriginal population to demonstrate a transformation that would enable the wronged to forgive, regain trust, and encourage a cohesive and mutually beneficial relationship. Imagining such a position, the non-Aboriginal population would be free of values of white superiority, the now outstanding land claims with Aboriginal peoples would be resolved, contested intellectual property regarding the use of Aboriginal language and culture would be resolved, the meaning of self-government and what this means in practice resolved, among other outstanding issues. The demand for Aboriginal peoples to be recognized as sovereign nations in relationship with the Government of Canada would be met. Perhaps, socio-economic evidence

whereby health, economic, and social indicators demonstrating a significant reduction in the gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples would be a sign of meaningful relationship-building. Were these kinds of demonstrations in evidence, on Thomas's terms, forgiveness on the part of Aboriginal peoples could be more likely envisaged as a possibility. This would appear to be a long time coming, and by extension, the kind of forgiveness ethically imagined in terms of the non-Aboriginal population's transformation that would accompany this relationship would be a long time coming, too.

In absence of these kinds of demonstrations, how could the non-Aboriginal population proceed or at least be encouraged to proceed? Based on the record of the state it would have a lot of room in which to act. While there have been some steps in symbolic recognition of Aboriginal peoples, other significant material recognition referred to above remains a struggle. There are hopeful signs within the polity. Public opinion polls show support for the federal government to do more to address Aboriginal poverty and more quickly resolve land claims.²⁹ This is encouraging, as is the attendance at the first TRC national event at The Forks in Winnipeg, MB.³⁰ Support for Aboriginal peoples increased after Mr. Harper delivered the apology and perhaps this support will grow as public awareness grows of the impact of the Indian Residential Schools on survivors, their families, and Aboriginal peoples collectively. At the same time, when Aboriginal peoples defend their land claims, or exercise their hunting and fishing rights, conflict and hostility toward Aboriginal peoples quickly rises.

The conversion of public support for Aboriginal peoples' improved socio-economic well-being, as well as self-government and resolution of land claims to Aboriginal peoples' satisfaction into meaningful action hinges on a transformation in the non-Aboriginal subject that would include an awareness and acceptance of colonization and the possibilities of decolonization. There are many pathways being brought into view, especially from Aboriginal peoples and their allies. In particular, education of the Residential Schools and their impact is key, as is the history of Aboriginal dispossession from their lands, and cultural repression and genocide sanctioned by the state. This would appear obvious to non-Aboriginal allies. Additionally, knowledge of historical practices of reconciliation and forgiveness between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal leaders in colonial Canada is slowly taking hold, at least in academia, as well as the cultural specificity of Aboriginal practices relating to reconciliation and forgiveness within a rich Aboriginal context. I think these provide some keys for slowly turning toward an opening of forgiveness that could strengthen the reconciliation processes underway.

Drawing upon Alfred and Fenton, Walters refers to Aboriginal practices of spiritual-kinship known as condolence customs when conflict or division occurred between colonial authority and Aboriginal leaders. The British sovereign was represented, not as a sovereign, but in relation to Aboriginal peoples, thus having responsibilities to maintain relations within the web of Aboriginal spiritual-kinship and not remaining outside these relations. When conflict occurred, condolence and gift exchanges took place in order to facilitate the restoration of the relationship. At this point of the paper's development, I am too heavily relying on Walters' account when he presents, mainly from an historical account, the words of a chief who said in the case of a murder committed by a settler that 'it has been concluded by the ancient covenant between our ancestors, that if any such accident happen', d...it should be reconciled and forgiven and...buried in oblivion.'³¹ While Walters suggests that the partial recognition

of spiritual-kinship and condolence practices were recognized in colonial-Aboriginal treaties, he writes that these lessons were forgotten or considered obsolete by the mid-nineteenth century.³² Issues and problems aside of colonialism and the power relations associated therein, it is noteworthy that there is a history of Aboriginal practices that could potentially inform the current situation with respect to the Indian Residential Schools. Following Walters, a mutual understanding of the conflict, injury, or loss of trust was an assumed obligation shared by colonial and Aboriginal leaders. It was this mutual understanding that would restore the relationship.

Recent outlines of cultural interventions open up possibilities for mutual understanding, especially on the part of non-Aboriginal peoples. These interventions include the following: restorying through, for example, Nuu-chah-nulth haa-huu-pah (sacred living stories) and quu'asa family way (recovering these stories) as a corrective strategy for colonialist narratives especially for the Nuu-chah-nulth³³; quilt making through the Living Quilt Project, for example and led by Alice Wakeman,³⁴ to produce public memory, reclaim experience, and healing; witnessing that comprises listening and storytelling;³⁵ the need for full engagement listening that involves the visual, emotional, and an open mindfulness;³⁶ to supplement the emphasis on listening, there is also the importance of silence in listening.³⁷ These each comprise an ethical dimension whereby there is a witness, especially a non-Aboriginal witness, to be fully engaged, attentive, and ready to receive the truth of another for the purpose of a future transformation. Is the non-Aboriginal population ready to engage in this manner? Perhaps, a relatively small minority is ready. Whether those who express support for improved social and economic conditions for Aboriginal peoples are ready remains uncertain because the conversion of an opinion into action remains uncertain. In 2008, the Environics Research Group conducted a National Benchmark Survey for Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada and the Commission to provide a baseline measure of public awareness of the Schools and their intergenerational impact on Aboriginal communities. About two-thirds of Canadians believed (and four in ten strongly believed) that individual Canadians with no experience in Indian residential schools have a role to play in reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.³⁸ Aboriginal people and new Canadians both shared this view. At the same time, those surveyed felt that counseling of Residential School survivors would make the greatest contribution toward reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, even more than raising public awareness, a formal apology, or financial compensation.³⁹ The most common perceived meanings of reconciliation by those surveyed were as follows (with the percentage of frequency in brackets): "closure/forgiveness or 'moving on, (16%)" awareness/understanding of the issue (15%), improving relations between Aboriginal people and other Canadians (15%), or making amends/apologizing (15%)."⁴⁰ Aboriginal respondents were less likely to provide a perceived meaning of reconciliation (49%) compared to non-Aboriginals (29%). What do these benchmarks indicate within the limits of survey and public opinion research? Initially, these suggest a need for openness in meaning creation of reconciliation, especially forgiveness, improved relations, making amends, and the subsequent action that could be pursued toward the fulfillment of that meaning. It suggests that forgiveness risks being likened to a line in the sand over which one steps not to look back and allows to be swept away into oblivion. As well, the reference to

counseling foreshadows that the onus will largely be put on survivors and their families to attain closure/forgiveness and move on.

As well, what emerges are the political possibilities for meaning creation associated with reconciliation, especially during the mandate of the Commission. In particular, an ethical dimension to relationship building that involves non-Aboriginal peoples could play a significant role in moving Aboriginal peoples and non-Aboriginal peoples toward a reconciliation that includes substantive social change for Aboriginal peoples, or at least maintains it as a political issue. The assumption, here, is that substantive social change of this nature will more likely occur when non-Aboriginal peoples accept the consequences of power relations emerging from colonial values and economic system as unfair. Under these circumstances, one could imagine demonstrative acts that reflect the transformation in belief and action along the lines of the man who had committed rape recounted above. It would be in this future when one could imagine the conditions under which Aboriginal peoples could forgive in a way that non-Aboriginal peoples could imagine themselves forgiving within a currently used framework of wronged and wrongdoer. The space created by the TRC provides opportunities for the kinds of cultural interventions that would bring Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples into more direct proximity. Specifically, the “Community Events” program includes support of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal partnerships and collaborations. This ethical groundwork may be among the lasting legacies of the Commission that could lead to greater demand for substantive change on the part of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples and the opportunity for a more meaningful reconciliation, because forgiveness would be more deserving. The kind of change that would demonstrate recognition and address the many problems surrounding the wrong of the Residential Schools itself takes time. Forgiveness borne of actions both ethical and socio-economic remains on the horizon, yet paradoxically, for forgiveness to occur, these actions are what would bring us closer to that horizon.

¹ Val Napoleon, “Who Gets to Say What Happened? Reconciliation Issues for the Gitxan,” in *Intercultural Dispute Resolution in Aboriginal Contexts*, eds. Catherine Bell and David Kahane (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004) 176.

² Harper, *Statement of Apology to former students of Indian Residential Schools*.

³ Clem Chartier, *Address to Parliament June 11, 2008*, online: 39th Parliament, 2nd Session, Edited Hansard, June 11, 2008, <http://www2.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?Language=E&Mode=1&Parl=39&Ses=2&DocId=3568890>.

⁴ Phil Fontaine, *Address to Parliament, June 11, 2008*, online: 39th Parliament, 2nd Session, Edited Hansard, June 11, 2008, <http://www2.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?Language=E&Mode=1&Parl=39&Ses=2&DocId=3568890>.

⁵ Patrick Brazeau, *Address to Parliament, June 11, 2008*, online: 39th Parliament, 2nd Session, Edited Hansard, June 11, 2008, <http://www2.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?Language=E&Mode=1&Parl=39&Ses=2&DocId=3568890>.

⁶ Mary Simon, *Address to Parliament, June 11, 2008*, online: 39th Parliament, 2nd Session, Edited Hansard, June 11, 2008, <http://www2.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?Language=E&Mode=1&Parl=39&Ses=2&DocId=3568890>.

⁷ Beverley Jacobs, *Address to Parliament, June 11, 2008*, online: 39th Parliament, 2nd Session, Edited Hansard, June 11, 2008, <http://www2.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?Language=E&Mode=1&Parl=39&Ses=2&DocId=3568890>.

⁸ Fontaine, *Address to Parliament, June 11, 2008*.

⁹ Chartier, *Address to Parliament, June 11, 2008*.

¹⁰ Jacobs, *Address to Parliament, June 11, 2008*.

¹¹ Kenny Blacksmith, *Update from Kenny Blacksmith*, online: National Forgiveness Summit, <<http://www.i4give.ca/index.cfm?i=11874&mid=7&nid=51844>>.

¹² According to an opinion poll post-apology in May 2008, 32 percent of Canadians disagreed that reconciliation is possible, while 39 percent agreed. Angus Reid, "Reconciliation with Aboriginals Possible for Two-in-Five Canadians," 8 May 2008, http://www.angus-reid.com/uppdf/2008.05.07_TRC.pdf.

¹³ Martha Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), 4.

¹⁴ Minow, *ibid.*

¹⁵ Minow, *ibid.*, 24.

¹⁶ Minow, *ibid.*, 14.

¹⁷ Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness* (London: Random House, 1999), 52.

¹⁸ Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness*, 23.

¹⁹ Kathryn J. Norlock and Jean Rumsey, "The Limits of Forgiveness." *Hypatia* (2009) 24:1, 112.

²⁰ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 241.

²¹ Jacques Derrida, *On cosmopolitanism and forgiveness*, tr. Mark Dooley and Michael Hughes (New York: Routledge, 2001), 31-32.

²² Marie Wilson, "Feeling The Winds of God-Charting A New Course," Remarks to the 39th General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada, June 11, 2010.

²³ Priscilla Hayner, *Unspeakable Truths* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 161.

²⁴ Joanna Quinn, "Introduction," in *Reconciliation(s): Transitional Justice in Postconflict Societies*, ed. Joanna Quinn, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), 5.

²⁵ Mark D. Walters, "The Jurisprudence of Reconciliation," in *The Politics of Reconciliation in Multicultural Societies*, eds. Will Kymlicka and Bashir Bashir (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

²⁶ Justice Murray Sinclair. "Supporting Families and Communities." Address to the Assembly of First Nations (December 13, 2010), online: http://download.isiglobal.ca/afn_en/archive_afn_en_2010-07-22_11134_high.html

²⁷ With respect to the Common Experience Payments, there are problems having to do with access, timeliness, and questions regarding the amount itself as appropriate.

With respect to Prime Minister's Harper's apology, the apology was undercut by Mr. Harper's statement that Canada did not have a colonial past at a G20 meeting within the year. With respect to the Commission, there have been issues related to the independence of the Commission and the defunding of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation whose work of supporting survivors was integral to and took place alongside the Commission.

²⁸ Laurence Thomas, "Forgiving as Righteousness," in *Reconciliation(s): Transitional Justice in Postconflict Societies*, ed. Joanna Quinn, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), 22.

²⁹ Angus Reid, "Canadians Agree with Prime Minister's Apology to Aboriginal Community," August 11, 2008, http://www.angus-reid.com/uppdf/2008.08.11_Aboriginal.pdf.

³⁰ Truth and Reconciliation Commission, "They no longer walk alone: TRC's Winnipeg event attracts 40,000, helps repair damage from a terrible time," *First Nations Voice* (July 2010),

http://www.firstnationsvoice.com/index.php?action=article_details&title=They+no+longer+walk+alone&id=149 (Accessed April 29, 2011).

³¹ Walters, 71.

³² *Ibid.*, 172.

³³ Jeff Corntassel, Chaw-win-is, T'lakwadzi, "Indigenous Storytelling, Truth-telling, and Community Approaches to Reconciliation," *English Studies in Canada* v. 35, n. 1 (March 2009): 137-159.

³⁴ Jennifer Henderson, Pauline Wakeham. "Colonial Reckoning, National Reconciliation?: Aboriginal Peoples and the Culture of Redress in Canada." *English Studies in Canada*, (March 2009) 35: 1, 22.

³⁵ (Qwul'sih'yah'maht (Robina Anne Thomas), "Honouring the Oral Traditions of My Ancestors through Storytelling," in *Research as Resistance: Critical, Indigenous, and Anti-Oppressive Approaches*, eds. Leslie Brown and Susan Strega (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press/Women's Press, 2005), 241-243-44, 253.

³⁶ Jo-ann Archibald (Q'um Q'um Xiiem) *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body, and Spirit* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), ix. 76

³⁷ Roger Simon, "The Pedagogical Insistence of Public Memory," in *Theorizing Historical Consciousness*, ed. Peter Seixas (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004) 193.

³⁸ Environics Research Group, "2008 National Benchmark Survey Prepared for Indian Residential Schools Canada and The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (May 2008: POR #414-07), iii.

³⁹ Findings are based on four in ten surveyed. Environics Research Group, ii-iii.

⁴⁰ Environics Research Group, 33.