



THE CANADIAN  
BAR ASSOCIATION  
Northwest Territories Branch

**REPORT OF THE LAW SOCIETY OF THE NWT/CANADIAN  
BAR ASSOCIATION - NWT BRANCH JOINT WORKING  
GROUP TO RESPOND TO THE TRUTH AND  
RECONCILIATION COMMISSION'S CALL TO ACTION**



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## Table of Contents

1. Background.....	Page 1
2. Challenges.....	Page 2
3. Process.....	Page 2
4. Revised Roadmap.....	Page 3
5. Our Tasks.....	Page 4
6. Conclusion.....	Page 10
Appendix 1 – Mandate.....	Page 11
Appendix 2 – Committee Members.....	Page 13
Appendix 3 – NWT Aboriginal governments/groups.....	Page 14
Appendix 4 – Proposed Joint Statement.....	Page 16

## **LSNT/CBA-NT Joint Working Group on Responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action**

### **1. Background**

#### **a. Terminology**

When referring to First Nations, Inuit or Metis people in the collective, this report uses the term 'Aboriginal', as this is the term used by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in its Calls to Action. However, where we are referring to groups that prefer to be identified as "Indigenous", we have also used that term. It is acknowledged that there is a trend toward greater usage of the term 'Indigenous' but that ultimately, respectful communication requires an inquiry with the group in question.

#### **b. Mandate**

The mandate of the Joint Working Group was to make recommendations to the executives of the Law Society of the Northwest Territories (LSNT) and the Northwest Territories Branch of the CBA (CBA-NT) on how to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Calls to Action.

A copy of the mandate is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

#### **c. Membership**

The Joint Working Group was co-chaired by one representative of LSNT executive and one representative of the CBA-NT executive. The membership of the Committee was appointed by the Law Society Executive, in consultation with the Co-Chairs, following a call for expressions of interest from members of the profession. A significant number of members expressed interest in being part of the Working Group. The selection process struck a balance between having representation from members in varied areas of practice with representation by Aboriginal and non- Aboriginal lawyers.

A list of the members of the Joint Working Group is attached as Appendix 2 to this report.

#### **d. Meeting dates**

The Working Group met 8 times between February 9, 2016 and May 30, 2016.

## **2. Challenges the Committee Faced**

The Working Group identified early on that the broad scope of our mandate would have to be narrowed down lest we become overwhelmed by its magnitude. The Working Group initially struggled with how to effectively carry out the terms of our mandate while remaining within its boundaries. The Working Group brainstormed possible ideas for “acts of reconciliation”. These ideas were noted, however the Working Group was challenged to remain focused on its advisory mandate to the executives and membership and not rush in to ‘solve the issue’ as lawyers tend to do.

The Working Group struggled with the following:

- how to achieve its mandate without a budget,
- how to ensure we would not simply be writing yet another report about the TRC Calls to Action,
- whether we were to propose concrete actions or not,
- whether we, as a Working Group, needed to come up with a specific public statement regarding the TRC recommendations.
- when and how to consult Aboriginal and Indigenous groups about our work.

Throughout the meetings, the Joint Working Group focused on the concept of consultation, which was a difficult issue. We also struggled with what consultation could and should look like in the NWT. Finally, we struggled with whether the Working Group should consult with the Aboriginal organizations in the NWT before or after making recommendations to the Executives of LSNT and CBA-NT. The Working Group wants to ensure that we achieve real and meaningful consultation.

In an attempt to remain focused on our advisory role and given the challenges noted above, the Working Group revised its roadmap, deadlines and expected outcomes.

### 3. Process

#### a. Timeline

The Joint Working Group functioned under a tight timeline. Our first meeting was February 9, 2016 with a May 31, 2016 deadline for submission of its Final Report to the Executives of LSNT and CBA-NT.

The following was the original proposed timeline:

February 9 – Initial meeting

February 23 – Review of the Final Report, the Calls to Actions and the recommendations related to the legal profession – individual or group work?

March 8 – Consultation – What does this mean in the NWT context and how do we achieve it?

March 22 – Scan of other jurisdictions, initial thoughts on acts of reconciliation.

April 5 – Initial thoughts on a public statement – What do we say and to whom to we say it?

April 19 – Consultation.

May 3 – Consultation and discussion re acts of reconciliation.

May 17 – Finalize report.

May 31 – Report delivered to the Executives of LSNT and CBA-NT.

As with any Working Group, our proposed timelines, agendas and deliverables changed as we delved deeper into the issues, encountered challenges and found our thinking evolved. One of the ten “Principles of Reconciliation” set out by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is this:

*Reconciliation is a process of healing of relationships that requires public truth sharing, apology, and commemoration that acknowledge and redress past harms.*

This statement best reflects the state of thinking of the group at the conclusion of its scheduled meetings in May 2016.

#### **4. Revised roadmap**

The Working Group began by reviewing the Calls to Action of the TRC Committee. We then researched acts of reconciliation in other jurisdictions, such as South Africa and Australia. We also looked to the Indigenous Bar Association (IBA) for guidance and to ensure we were not repeating work that they had already initiated. The theme of how to achieve effective and meaningful consultation permeated almost all of our discussions. We then drafted and reviewed a public statement. We ended with finalizing our Report to the executives of LSNT and CBA-NT.

#### **5. Our tasks**

##### **a. Review the TRC's Calls to Action and Final Report**

One of the tasks of the Working Group was to ensure that all members were familiar with the TRC Final Report and Calls to Action. Reflective of the magnitude of the history involved, the volume of material produced by the TRC is easily overwhelming. Our members approached this critical task individually with at least one member attempting to read the entire multi-volume report, others tackling only the final volume specific to reconciliation but with all assuring their familiarity with the Executive Summary and Calls to Action.

The volume of history and material is not only physically daunting but it is also emotionally overwhelming. Fortunately the TRC and its Chair, Justice Murray Sinclair (now the Honourable Senator Murray Sinclair) continue to speak with hope for the future and the good that will come from knowing leading to understanding and understanding leading to respect. With the goal of eventual understanding, it is easier to approach the task of learning.

##### **b. Identify TRC Recommendations related to the legal profession or justice system**

The TRC Calls to Action, in their entirety, have relevance to lawyers whether individually in their diverse practices, as leaders in their communities, collectively as law society regulators or as Canadian Bar Association advocates for social and legal change.

The Calls to Action speak directly to the Federation of Law Societies in Call 27. As the national association of the governing bodies of a self-governing profession, this Call is in a sense speaking directly to lawyers. Call 27 identifies the necessity of knowledge to lead to understanding and change by calling for appropriate cultural competency

training for all lawyers. The Call identifies both substantive and procedural aspects of what adequate training would look like.

Call 28 speaks directly to law schools and by association also speaks to lawyers as mentors, principles, professors and alumni. This Call asks that all law students be required to take a course on “Aboriginal people and the law” and again identifies the myriad substantive and procedural aspects of this topic that would benefit all future lawyers in Canada.

Lawyers working in the Public Service should take careful note that the vast majority of the Calls speak to various levels of government to take action in such diverse spheres as media regulation, amending the *Physical Activity and Sport Act* and publishing government legal opinions where they are intended to be used as guides for determining Aboriginal and Treaty rights.

The first five Calls open by addressing the disproportionate number of Aboriginal children in government care. Highlights include the need for training that incorporates family healing opportunities and the requirement that all child-welfare decision makers, which will include lawyers, consider the impact of the residential school experience on children and their caregivers.

Measures for acknowledging and enforcing language rights, including by enacting an Aboriginal Languages Act, are found in Calls 13 through 17.

Calls 25 through 42 are categorized under “Justice.” Many relate directly or indirectly to the inequalities and lack of relevant programs, that contribute to the shameful overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in Canadian jails.

Under the broad heading of “Reconciliation,” calls 43 to 49 seek a reorganizing of the legal relationship between Aboriginal peoples and Canadian governments. The calls include adoption and implementation of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, a Royal Proclamation of Reconciliation to build upon the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and the Treaty of Niagara of 1764 and a repudiation of concepts that were historically used to justify European sovereignty over Aboriginal peoples such as *terra nullius*.

“Equity for Aboriginal People in the Legal System” (Calls 50 to 51) envisions dramatic change to the way in which Aboriginal people and cultures form part of the Canadian legal and justice framework, including the call to establish Aboriginal law institutes to aid in the development, understanding of and access to Aboriginal legal traditions.

Some Calls that may not overtly address the legal profession or justice system are nevertheless relevant to them. For example, the Calls to establish by statute a National Council for Reconciliation (Calls 53-55) and the calls to address the tragedy of murdered and missing Aboriginal women (Calls 41 and 55(vi)) both engage matters with legal relevance.

Most of the 94 Calls to Action impact or could be impacted by laws, policies and other work done daily by lawyers including as policy makers, business people and volunteers involved in youth, sports or community services. Lawyers should also consider that our clients may well seek our advice on how to respond to the Calls. For example, the medical profession could well seek legal advice about their ethical obligations in Call 22 that seeks to have the health care system recognize and collaborate with Aboriginal healing practices. Similarly, educational districts are likely looking at Call 10 that describes a complete revision of how education is provided to Aboriginal peoples and communities

The potential role of the legal profession in response to the Calls should be a cause of significant inspiration and opportunity.

**c. Consult as required with Aboriginal organizations and Peoples in the NWT**

Our consensus is that the Aboriginal people (including First Nations, Métis and Inuit) of the Northwest Territories (“NWT”) should be contacted and consulted with before any concrete action is taken in responding to the Calls to Action as part of reconciliation. As legal professionals our area of expertise would be best used focusing on (a) the Justice related Calls to Action and (b) on how our responses could be recognized as meaningful steps towards reconciliation with Aboriginal people.

This report addresses the reality that before the LSNT and the CBA-NT respond to the Calls to Action consultation with the Aboriginal people impacted directly should first take place. We recognize that this part of the report is meant to provide direction and guidance on consultation as part of our response to the Calls to Action.

Part of meaningful consultation must include the education of LSNT/CBA members on the impacts of Indian Residential Schools on Aboriginal people. Before our membership approaches the Aboriginal people of the NWT, we first need to understand their history and how this history has shaped the communities and their legal issues today. This is why educating our LSNT/CBA membership is key. Further, consultation should be an ongoing dialogue in order for it to be meaningful.

There are a number of Aboriginal LSNT and CBA-NT members, including the current LSNT President Shannon Cumming, who have personal connections with various Aboriginal groups/governments in the NWT and who have expressed interest in making meaningful contact to explore best practices for consultation with particular Aboriginal groups.

The membership of the LSNT and CBA-NT also includes Indigenous Bar Association (“IBA”) members. The IBA of Canada is comprised of Indigenous law graduates and includes: judges; lawyers; law-students; and law professors. The IBA’s objectives include: promoting the advancement of legal and social justice for Indigenous peoples in Canada; promoting the reform of policies and laws affecting Indigenous peoples in Canada; fostering public awareness within the legal community, the Indigenous community and the general public in respect of legal and social issues of concern to Indigenous peoples in Canada.

The IBA has expressed that they wish to work with all Law Societies in responding to the Calls to Action and is currently advising many Law Societies across Canada. The IBA believes that Law Societies should prioritize consulting with Aboriginal people in their respective jurisdictions. The IBA has expressed that the LSNT’s response to the Calls to Action is of great interest to them as our population in the NWT is approximately 50% Aboriginal.

The Joint Working Group has suggested that the LSNT designate a member of the Executive Committee to liaise with the NWT Aboriginal groups/governments going forward to effect meaningful consultation in response to the Calls to Action.

The Joint Working Group recognizes that consultation with Aboriginal people in the NWT is a large task and may include significant financial cost if consultation includes travel to any of the 33 NWT communities. Exploring external funding for travel would help fund these efforts. Some sources of funding could include the CBA “funds for the Future Program” and possibly federal funds available through the Aboriginal Justice Strategy.

One suggestion on reaching out to the Aboriginal population that was contemplated by the Joint Working Group was to attend the Dene Nation Annual Assembly which takes place in Fort Simpson from July 26 to 28, 2016. The Dene Nation represents most First Nations groups across the NWT but does not include the Métis or Inuvialuit populations. Another way of reaching of the Aboriginal population in the Capital is to attend the Aboriginal Day celebrations in Yellowknife and Dettah.

In order to facilitate any actions that may take place as a result of the work of the Joint Working Group, we developed a list of groups/governments in the NWT (those in bold represent membership in the Dene Nation). These are included as Appendix 3 to this Report.

**d. Identify and propose acts of reconciliation that can be made by the Law Society, CBA, the profession and individual members**

As noted above, the predominant recommendation of the Joint Working Group is to ensure that consultation occurs with Aboriginal and Indigenous groups and governments before LSNT and/or CBA-NT take any concrete steps to implement the TRC Calls to Action.

Our second main recommendation is for the executives of LSNT and CBA-NT to provide the Joint Working Group with feedback as to whether and if so how, a public statement should be made.

The Joint Working Group also came up with a number of other specific recommendations that we are putting to the LSNT and CBA-NT executives for consideration, as follows:

*i. Consultation and Relationship Building*

- a. We propose that the leaders of all NWT Aboriginal and Indigenous governments be invited to the Presidents' Dinner held each Fall in Yellowknife. We invite dignitaries such as the Mayor of Yellowknife and the Commissioner of the NWT. We think that recognizing NWT Aboriginal and Indigenous dignitaries by inviting them to this event could be a first step in building relationships. We note though that this suggestion would require budgetary assessment for that event as we would not typically ask an invited dignitary to pay for their ticket.
- b. We propose that the executives of LSNT and CBA-NT partner on relevant TRC initiatives with organizations such as the IBA, YKDFN to further the importance of relationship building.
- c. We propose that LSNT consider creating a law society executive role: Aboriginal Liaison (in addition to member at large)

*ii. Continuing Legal Education*

- a. Recommendation 27 from the TRC Calls to action is that we provide continuing legal education on the Independent Assessment Program

process and/or the TRC Commission Report to our members and to the public.

- b. We recommend that LSNT consider making the TRC Calls to Action and Executive Summary of the TRC Report a part of the Law Society's mandatory reading list for all new members
- c. We recommend that LSNT ensure all staff from both organization as well as Executive members (and possibly Committee and Section chairs) receive cultural competence training.
- d. We recommend that LSNT and CBA-NT continue to participate in public education and information initiatives that focus on areas identified in the TRC recommendations (over representation of Aboriginal children in the child welfare system, high rates of incarceration etc).
- e. We recommend that LSNT and CBA-NT implement bi-Annual continuing professional development (CPD) on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – a check in: what it is, Canada's role past and present, what progress has been seen.
  - i. The first such CPD is scheduled for June 1, 2016 and is being jointly hosted by LSNT and CBA-NT.
- f. Bi-Annual CPD on the TRC Calls to Action –a check in: a refresher on the Indian Residential School system and the NWT's unique experience, what steps have been taken locally and nationally toward reconciliation
- g. The 2 CPD's above could alternate years

*iii. Reaching out to professionals outside of the legal system*

- a. One suggestion we came up with was to engage Art as a bridge between cultures. (eg hire a videographer to document a selection of NWT stories – including those of some of our lawyers, about how the IRSS has affected their lives/practices.)
- b. Another suggestion we had was to contact the Prince of Wales Heritage Center about partnering to set up public displays illustrating the relationship between lawyers and Aboriginal people.
- c. Approach other self-governing professions to offer their executives and general membership access to the process we develop herein including appropriately designed CPDs

*iv. Recruitment and mentorship of Aboriginal lawyers*

- a. We encourage the LSNT and CBA-NT to allow members to self-identify as Aboriginal and to track data around the numbers of Aboriginal lawyers in the NWT

- b. It would also be interesting to be able to track the number of Aboriginal students enrolled in law schools and to be intentional about offering support for their studies and career path.
  
- e. **Develop a public statement on behalf of the LSNT and CBA-NT in recognition of the profession's role in the residential school program.**

One of the responsibilities tasked to the Joint Working Group was to develop a public statement on behalf of LSNT and CBA-NT in recognition of the legal profession's role in the residential school program.

The Joint Working Group did develop such a statement, which can be found at Appendix 4. It is important to note that 2 full meetings were devoted to this and that there was a range of opinion around the messages that should be included.

We discussed trying to make this statement as soon as possible over the summer of 2016. However, in the end we decided that we would need guidance from the executives of LSNT and CBA-NT as to (a) whether any changes should be made to the proposed statement; (b) whether the LSNT membership would need to vote on whether to make the statement on behalf of LSNT; (c) if it is decided to proceed with the statement, where and in what format it should be made.

## **6. Conclusion**

- a. The Executives of the LSNT and CBA-NT should decide as soon as is practicable whether it is desirable that a public statement be made.
- b. The LSNT should continue the work started by this committee in a manner deemed appropriate to keep the awareness of the issues and the TRC's Calls to Action on its workplan.
- c. Relationship building and consultation should be the watchwords: whether with Aboriginal governments, communities, law students or lawyers.
- d. Formal activities and/or legal education opportunities with a focus on the TRC's Calls to Action should be coordinated by both the LSNT and CBA-NT.

## APPENDIX 1

### Mandate

#### **LAW SOCIETY OF THE NWT/CANADIAN BAR ASSOCIATION - NWT BRANCH JOINT WORKING GROUP TO RESPOND TO THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION'S CALL TO ACTION**

##### ***Mandate***

To advise the Executives the Law Society of the NWT (LSNT and the Canadian Bar Association, NWT Branch (CBA-NT) with advice how to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Call to Action.

##### ***Responsibilities***

- Review the TRC's Call to Action and Final Report
- Identify TRC recommendations related to the legal profession or justice system
- Consult as required with Aboriginal Organizations and Peoples in the NWT
- Identify and propose acts of reconciliation that can be made by the Law Society, CBA, the profession and individual members
- Develop a public statement on behalf of the LSNT and CBA-NT in recognition of the profession's role in the residential school program

##### ***Membership***

The Joint Working Group will be co-chaired by one representative of the Law Society of the Northwest Territories, and one representative of the Northwest Territories Branch of the Canadian Bar Association.

The membership of the Committee will be by appointment by the Law Society Executive, in consultation with the Co-Chairs, following a call for expressions of interest from members of the profession.

##### ***Meetings***

Meetings will be at the call of the Co-Chairs, and will, at a minimum, be held monthly.

##### ***Quorum***

A quorum is at least three members, including at least one Co-Chair.

##### ***Resources***

The Law Society of the Northwest Territories shall provide staff support to the Committee.

***Reporting***

The Co-Chairs shall report to the executive of their respective organizations monthly, or as otherwise directed.

The Committee shall prepare and submit a final report no later than May 31, 2016.

## APPENDIX 2

### **Committee Members**

Karen Wilford, Co-Chair, LSNT

Tricia Ralph, Co-Chair, CBA-NT

Jeannette Savoie, Staff Lawyer, Legal Aid Outreach, Yellowknife

Joan Mercredi, Sole Practitioner, Fort Smith

Magnolia Unka-Wool, Associate, Yellowknife

Sacha Paul, Associate, Winnipeg, MB

Caroline Wawzonek, Associate, Yellowknife

Meaghan Enright, Special Advisor, Justice Canada

## APPENDIX 3

### List of Aboriginal groups/governments in the NWT

Listings in bold represent membership in the Dene Nation

#### Regional governments include:

Akaiitcho Territory Government

- **Deninu K'ue (Fort Resolution), Chief Louis Balisillie**
- **Yellowknives Dene First Nation (Dettah), Chief Edward Sangris**
- **Yellowknives Dene First Nation (N'dilo), Chief Ernest Betsina**
- **Smith's Landing First Nation (Fort Smith), Chief Andrew Wandering Spirit**
- **Łutselk'e Dene First Nation (Lutselk'e), Chief Felix Lockhart**

Deh Cho First Nations – Grand Chief Herb Norwegian

- **Kát'odeeche First Nation (Hay River Reserve), Chief Roy Fabien**
- **West Point First Nation (Hay River Reserve), Chief Courtney Cayen**
- **Liidlii Kue First Nation (Fort Simpson), Chief Gerald Antoine**
- Fort Simpson Métis Nation, President Marie Lafferty
- **Pehdzeh Ki First Nation (Wrigley), Chief Darcy E. Moses**
- **Ka'a'gee Tu First Nation (Kakisa), Chief Lloyd Chicot**
- **Nahanni Butte Dene Band, Chief Peter Marcellais**
- **Jean Marie River First Nation, Chief Gladys Norwegian**
- **Deh Gah Got'ie First Nation (Fort Providence), Chief Joachim Bonnetrouge**
- Fort Providence Métis Nation, President Clifford McLeod
- **Sambaa K'e Dene Band (Trout Lake), Chief Dolphus Jumbo**
- **Begaa Deh Shuh Tah Got'ie (Tulita), Chief David Etchinelle**

Gwich'in Tribal Council

- Ehdiitat Gwich'in Council (Aklavik), President Andrew Charlie
- **Gwichya Gwich'in Council (Tsiigehtchic), President Grace Blake**
- Nihtat Gwich'in Council (Inuvik), President Jozef Carnogursky
- **Tetlit Gwich'in Council (Fort McPherson), President Wilbert Firth**

NWT Métis Nation – President Garry Bailey

- Fort Smith Métis Council, President Ken Hudson
- Hay River Métis Council, President Trevor Beck
- Fort Resolution Métis Council, President Arthur Beck

Sahtu Secretariat Inc. – Grand Chief Wilfred McNeely Jr. and Chair Ethel Blondin-Andrew

- Norman Wells Land Corporation (Métis Nation), President Sherry Hodgson
- **Tulita Band Council, Chief Frank Andrew**

- Tulita Land Corporation (Métis Nation), President Clarence Campbell
- Tulita Yamoria Community Secretariat, Ms. Dyanne Doctor, Chair
- **Behdzi Ahda First Nation Band Council (Coville Lake), Chief Wilbert Kochon**
- **K'asho Got'ine Community Council (Fort Good Hope), Chief Wilfred McNeely Jr.**
- **Déljñę First Nation, Chief Leonard Kenny**
- Déljñę Land/ Financial Corporation, President Gina Dolphus
- Fort Norman Métis Lands and Financial Corporation (Tulita), President Eddie McPherson Jr.

#### Tlichó Government

- **Community Government of Behchokø, Chief Clifford Daniels**
- **Community Government of Whatì, Chief Alfonz Nitsiza**
- **Community Government of Wekweètì, Chief Johnny Arrowmaker**
- **Community Government of Gamètì, Chief David Wedawin**

#### Inuvialuit Regional Corporation

- Inuvik Community Corporation, Vacant
- Ulukhaktok Community Corporation, Colin Okheena
- Paulatuk Community Corporation, Lawrence Ruben
- Sachs Harbour Community Corporation, Vernon Amos
- Tuktoyaktuk Community Corporation, Vince Teddy
- Aklavik Community Corporation, Billy Archie

#### Community Based Governments

- Salt River First Nation (Fort Smith), Chief Frieda Martselos
- **Acho Dene Koe First Nation (Fort Liard)**
- **Aklavik Indian Band, Chief Danny Greenland**
- Gwichya Gwich'in Band (Tsiigehtchic), Chief Phillip Blake
- Inuvik Indian Band, Sub Chief Melba Mitchell
- Tetlit Gwich'in Band (Fort McPherson), Chief William Koe
- Aklavik Northwest Métis Council, President Charlie Furlong
- Hay River Métis Council, President Wally Schumann
- Yellowknife Métis Council, Clem Paul
- Métis Association Local #54 (Fort Good Hope), President Winston McNeely
- Inuvik Métis Council, Bridget Larocque
- North Slave Métis Alliance, President William Enge

## APPENDIX 4

### **Proposed Joint Statement in Response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action**

On May 28, 2015 the Supreme Court of Canada Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin delivered the fourth annual Pluralism Lecture of the Global Centre for Pluralism in Ottawa. In describing Canada's policies in relation to Residential Schools, she stated

“The objective – I quote from Sir John A. Macdonald, revered forefather – was to ‘take the Indian out of the child,’ and thus solve what was referred to as the Indian problem. ‘Indianness’ was not to be tolerated; rather it must be eliminated. In the buzz-word of the day, assimilation; in the language of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, cultural genocide.”

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Reports reveal a shameful part of Canada's history, but the Commission's Calls to Action provide a path forward. The Law Society of the NWT and the NWT Branch of the Canadian Bar Association accept and support the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The Law Society of the NWT and the NWT Branch of the Canadian Bar Association state that lawyers played a role in the drafting of policies and laws, including the Indian Act, making attendance at schools mandatory. This resulted in approximately 150,000 Aboriginal children attending residential schools.

As regulators and advocates, lawyers have an ethical duty to acknowledge responsibility for this role.

The Indian Residential School System facilitated an abuse of power by the Government and Church officials administering the schools, resulting in overwhelming mental, physical, spiritual and sexual abuse of thousands of Aboriginal children. The harms caused were so profound and so enduring that it is impossible to put words to them. They are still affecting Aboriginal families and communities today.

We aspire to be reconciled with our First Nations, Inuit and Metis brothers and sisters.

We are not sure yet what that reconciliation process will be, but we are committed to these things along the way:

- Meaningful and ongoing education about the history and legacy of the Indian Residential School System in Canada for all lawyers who practice in the Northwest Territories
- Developing relationships with the First Nations, Inuit and Metis communities in the Northwest Territories so that lawyers have a better understanding of Aboriginal experiences generally and within the justice system
- Respectful communication with and about First Nations, Inuit and Metis peoples

The Law Society of the NWT and the NWT Branch of the Canadian Bar Association are committed to ensuring that we acknowledge this shameful part of Canadian history, and that we never again lose sight of the responsibility that comes with the privilege of the practice of law.