

Statement by the Archbishop of Halifax-Yarmouth and Bishop of Antigonish regarding Reconciliation with the Mi'kmaq

In light of recent public media interest and discussion around the relationship of the Catholic Church and the Indigenous peoples of Canada, we felt it was important to update Catholics in Nova Scotia on our commitment to reconciliation with the Mi'kmaq.

In Nova Scotia, the connection between the Mi'kmaq and the Catholic Church is unique and distinct from relationships between other Indigenous peoples and the Church. We recognize and acknowledge that from the very beginning European Catholics were welcomed by the Mi'kmaq and the fact that we continue to live on unceded Mi'kmaq territory.

The relationship between the Catholic Church and the Mi'kmaq nation was consolidated more than 400 years ago with the baptism in 1610 of Mi'kmaq Grand Chief Membertou. This made the Mi'kmaq the first indigenous people to embrace Catholicism thus making the relationship between the Mi'kmaq and the Church a deep and long lasting one. That occasion was marked by an agreement between the Mi'kmaq and the Holy See known as the Concordat of 1610. This agreement has been kept alive through oral history and symbolized in the great Wampum Belt in Mi'kmaq hieroglyphics.

In continuity with these past agreements and our long standing relationship, we and our fellow Nova Scotians have the obligation to uphold treaty responsibilities with the Mi'kmaq.

In Nova Scotia, we the bishops entrusted with the pastoral care of its resident Catholics, apologize and accept our share of responsibility for the tragedies that occurred at the residential school in this province. In 2011, Archbishop Mancini participated in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission process where he stated: "I have inherited a black mark. I have a long, long way to go before I can understand your hurt. Unfortunately, some of us, sometimes along the line, forgot why we were here."

As clergy leaders for the two Catholic dioceses in Nova Scotia, we continue to maintain regular pastoral care of our Mi'kmaq Catholic brothers and sisters. Recently we have also entered into a dialogue of reconciliation with Mi'kmaq elders, with the most recent listening circle having taken place this past April. Furthermore, we are planning two more listening sessions with other members of the Mi'kmaq leadership later this year.

Once we have completed these listening sessions, we will be providing an additional statement of healing and reconciliation at the Treaty Day Mass on October 1, 2018.



Most Rev. Anthony Mancini
Archbishop of Halifax-Yarmouth



Most Rev. Brian Dunn
Bishop of Antigonish