

July 6, 2021

Dear Bishop Bergie,

The residential school system was an attempt by the Government of Canada and Canadian churches to erase Indigenous culture from Canada.

The recent discovery of unmarked graves at former residential schools in Kamloops, Marieval and Cranbrook has shocked the conscience of Canadians. As you know, these schools were run by the Catholic Church.

While official apologies have been issued from the Anglican, Presbyterian and United Churches and the Government of Canada, who have accepted responsibility for their role in the residential school system, the Catholic Church has not. Despite pleas from the Prime Minister and indigenous leaders, Pope Francis has so far refused to acknowledge responsibility and apologize for the role of the Church in the spiritual, cultural, emotional, physical, and sexual abuse of First Nations, Inuit and Métis children in Catholic-run residential schools. This is specifically requested in the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions' Call to Action #58.

Residents are looking to us, as community leaders, to advance reconciliation. Therefore we, the undersigned, call upon you as the leader of the Catholic Church in Niagara, to demand an apology on Canadian soil from Pope Francis.

Furthermore, residents expect the full support of the Catholic Church in providing records and compensation for the trauma inflicted on children by the Church.

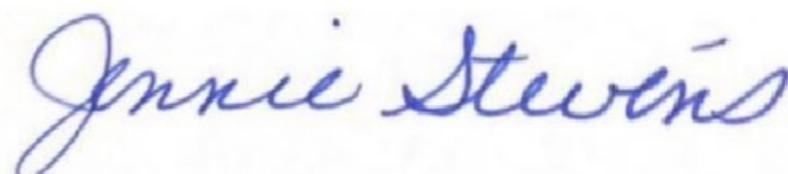
Your voice, along with your colleagues in the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops can play an important role in amplifying this request and ensuring the Catholic Church acknowledges its role in the residential school system and advances our steps along the path of reconciliation.

We would be more than happy to help arrange an opportunity for further discussion with local indigenous leaders on how the Catholic Church and the Diocese of Niagara can play a meaningful role in reconciliation.

Sincerely,



Chris Bittle
Member of Parliament
St. Catharines



Jennie Stevens
Member of Provincial Parliament
St. Catharines



Walter Sendzik
Mayor
St. Catharines