

Prayer of Lament by Rev. Maggie McLeod, daughter of a File Hills School Survivor

O God, we come before you with pain in our hearts as we remember the children of the Indian Residential Schools. We remember how they were plucked up from their homes by a system of arrogance that denied a good way of life. Their tears, their hunger, their loneliness and their fear is not forgotten. The shame that was taught, lingers yet. The pain that was inflicted on their bodies remains.

We remember the parents, the aunties; the uncles; the grandmas and grandpas left to grieve the empty places in their home and their communities. Mothers were left with tear stained aprons; fathers suffered in unyielding silence; How was it they were expected to carry on, having lost their joy, their purpose? And how was it that their community could continue to come together to celebrate life and move together toward a bright future, when their future is gone?

How long will it take to strengthen family, homes, and spirits? How long will it take to heal the memories? Who must we be, and what must we do to restore integrity and dignity to your world?

God of all great transformation, in our lament we cry out to you.
 God of all healing power, in our pain we call your name.
 God of all life, in our hope we come before you in humble prayer.

We pray that all your children may once again sing and dance the songs planted in their hearts since time immemorial. We pray that in their play and in their learning they be strengthened in wisdom and truth. May they carry the knowledge of their ancestors – those ways of life that brought abundance and joy to this pilgrimage on earth.

We pray for the children's health and wholeness; may they reconnect with your unending love that they may once again know who they are; their giftedness; and their value. We remember those children who have found their home in you. We acknowledge those who left this earth having heard no words of apology or lament. We are grateful that you hold these ones close. May they find in you the peace and rest that eluded them on this earth.

We pray for parents and extended family, too. Release them from their feeling of guilt and burden. Help them to express their grief. May their homes once again ring out with laughter and hope. May communities reflect the joy of family life once again. May young and old come together to work toward reclaiming and renewing minds, bodies, emotions and spirits. And finally, we pray that one day this world, your world, will be a place where children are no longer harmed and will never again be removed from a mother's embrace, or a father's helping hand.

We pray in the name of Jesus, your Son, who showed us a way to your Kingdom come on earth. All my relations, Amen.¹

¹Adapted from the work of Maggie McLeod, in Canadian Ecumenical Anti-Racism Network's *Mamow-Be-Mo-Tay-Tah: Let us Walk Together* (Toronto, ON: Canadian Council of Churches Press, 2009), 107-109.