

# Apology to Action: A Pilgrimage for Reconciliation



Photograph: Dawn Vaneyk

**You are invited to demonstrate your commitment to the work of building right relations by making a Pilgrimage for Reconciliation to the site of the Cairn at Laurentian University in Sudbury, Ontario, or if you cannot travel there, to a place that is special to you.**

**This is a meaningful way to mark the Indigenous Day of Prayer on June 21<sup>st</sup>.**

**Please ensure that you follow Public Health Guidelines while visiting the cairn.**

Thirty-five years ago, in August 1986, during the 31st General Council of the United Church of Canada, at Laurentian University in Sudbury, Ontario, the then Moderator, Rt Rev Robert Smith, sat with elders and offered words of apology on our behalf, for the ways the church had contributed to the dismantling of a sacred spiritual path, and the destruction of Indigenous culture, and community. The Apology was the result of a courageous call from Alberta Billy, Elder and member of the All-Native Circle Conference that Church to account for its complicity in the suffering of the people it claimed to love.

Apology is hollow without a conscious repairing of relationship, so to that end, the Apology was received but not accepted as complete. A Cairn was built to remember the historic act, and, more importantly, the commitment made to reconciliation.

Thirty-five years later, we invite you to make a pilgrimage to consider where we are on our healing journey and what actions we, as individuals, members of faith communities and citizens of Canada need to take to live out this Apology.

### **To prepare for your pilgrimage to the Cairn site in Sudbury, or to a place that is special to you.**

- Read the words of the Apology and the Response <https://canadianshieldrc.ca/>
- Consider how these words can be used to guide the work of reconciliation and right relationship building
- Optional: Paint or Decorate an apology stone. Hold the stone in your hands as you reflect on the words of the Apology and Response. Paint or decorate the stone with messages and symbols of reconciliation and hope. For example: “I remember”, “I care”, “Reconciliation matters”. Place them at the Cairn, in your garden or other special place.

### **At the Cairn Site (or if not able to travel, the place you have chosen to make your pilgrimage):**

- If you are at the cairn, read and reflect on the words displayed on the plaques at the site.
- In what way have you and/or your faith community honoured and lived into the words of the Apology?
- Take some time to honour and give thanks to all those who have dedicated themselves to the work of reconciliation – Indigenous and Settler people – consider how you will continue to walk the journey that began here 35 years ago
- Consider the current issues that Indigenous people in your area are experiencing. Is there an immediate action that you or your faith community can take to support this need? For example: advocate for clean drinking water or safe schools, support environmental efforts, respond to urgent calls for action, support better access to education, medicine, family and children’s services, call for Indigenous curriculum across all levels of education, etc.
- Make an intentional commitment to some actions that you will take to ensure that “the Apology is not symbolic but that these are the words of action and sincerity.” See the suggestions on the following page.
- If you have painted rocks, place them against the wall that surrounds the cairn and as you do so ask for strength from the Creator for your healing journey. (Please do not place them on the cairn)
- Offer a prayer of repentance, commitment and hope. You might choose to offer these words:

Creator God, in this holy place, we remember with sorrow the historical injustices visited on Indigenous peoples by colonial attitudes and actions; we lament that we did not see the richness of the spirituality, traditions and cultures of the First Peoples of this land. We acknowledge that colonial and racist attitudes are still present in our society, that injustices continue and that we are complicit in them. We ask for your strength and guidance as we commit ourselves to the hard and humbling work of building right relations and acknowledging the worth and dignity of “all our relations.” Amen

### Five Calls to Action on How to Live the Apology

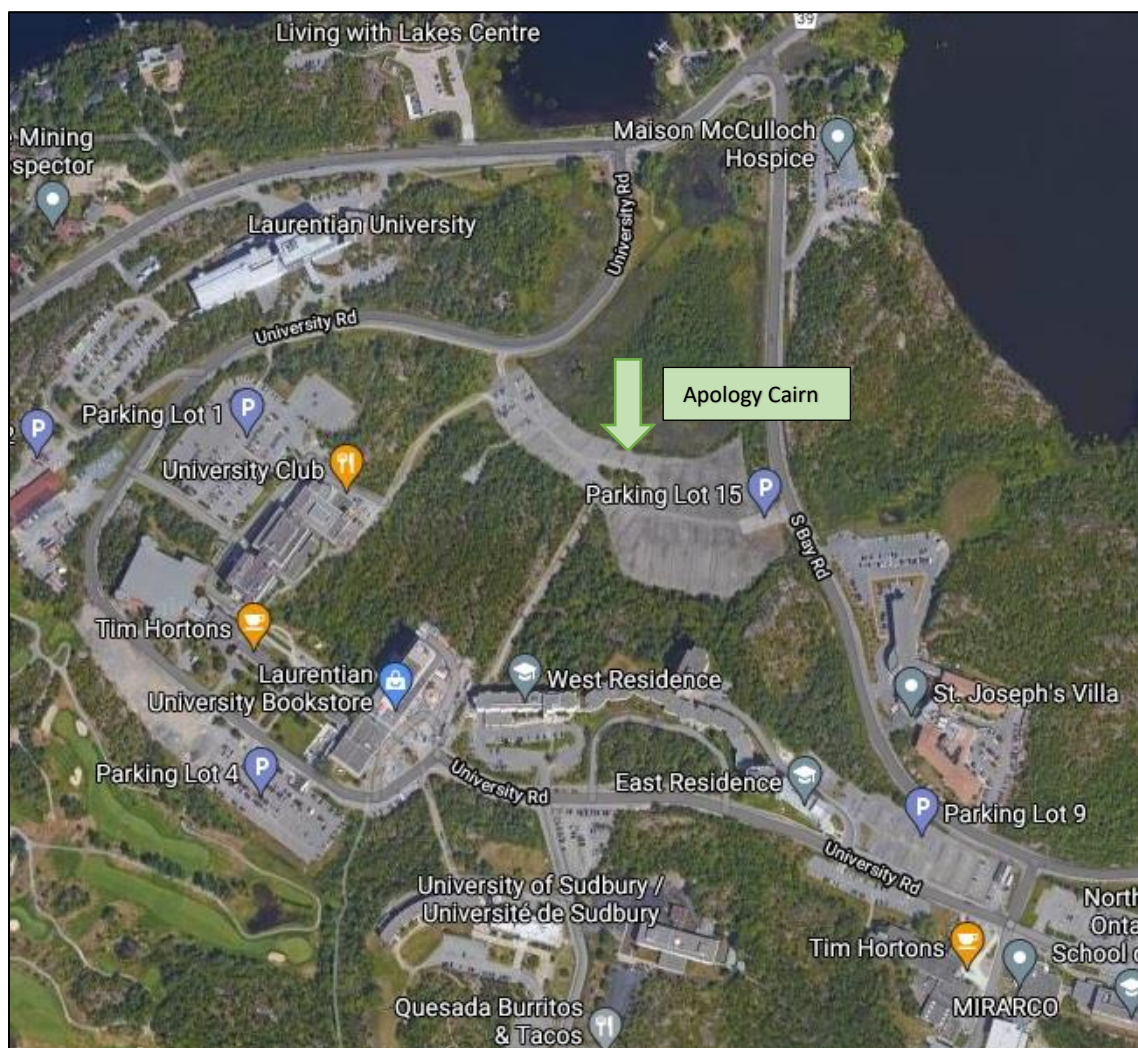
1. Seek out and celebrate the historic and current contributions of Indigenous people in your region - artists, storytellers, knowledge keepers, athletes, leaders and other notable people
2. Listen and respond to the challenges that Indigenous people – both on and off reserve – are experiencing in your region
3. De-colonize your relationship with Indigenous peoples – that means recognizing and valuing the knowledge and experience that Indigenous people have
4. Become an ally and an advocate – use your voice to uplift some of the challenges that Indigenous people are facing – Language, culture, land, health, needs to be restored - both independent of and with the support of non-Indigenous people.
5. We have already been given the framework for justice and reconciliation – the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples - Urge our Government to uphold and implement UNDRIP into Law

### Want to do more?

- Use the Minute for Right Relations or other resources available on the CSRC Right Relations Page – <https://canadianshielddrc.ca/right-relations/>
- Watch *Truly and Humbly: Memories of the First Apology* at [Manitou Intentional Learning Community \(manitoulearningcommunity.com\)](https://manitoulearningcommunity.com). Organize a discussion in your faith community – study guide available.
- Read books written by Indigenous authors – Check out the 2021 summer reading list on the CSRC’s Right Relations Resource Page
- Check out the study guides for *Children of the Broken Treaty*, *Speaking My Truth*, *Indian Horse*, *Moon of the Crusted Snow* and *From the Ashes* on the MILC website under Resources. [Manitou Intentional Learning Community \(manitoulearningcommunity.com\)](https://manitoulearningcommunity.com)
- Listen to Indigenous music – check out playlists on CBC Reclaimed, Spotify, YouTube, etc.
- Read news from an Indigenous perspective – APTN, CBC Indigenous, Anishinabek News
- Shop from Indigenous owned businesses
- Check out the Great Lakes Powwow Guide at <http://anishinabek.ca/Flipbooks/PW2021rev.html> or “attend” this year’s Summer Solstice Festival online - <https://summersolsticefestivals.ca/>
- Listen to some podcasts: Unreserved with Falen Johnson on CBC, Native Currents, 2 Crees in a Pod are a few suggestions
- TikTok fans check out: Michelle Chubb (@indigenous\_baddie), James Jones (@notoriouscree), Shina Novalinga (@SHINANNOVA)
- Learn some of the Indigenous language of your region
- Learn about some traditional recipes and local food from the area and get cooking
- If there are children in your life, read some of the children’s books listed in the summer reading list mentioned above or any of these other great books –*The Elders Are Watching*, *Sacred Seven*, *Go Show the World*, *Kookum’s Red Shoes*, *Fatty Legs*
- Move from being an *ally* to being an *accomplice* – continue to advocate by posting to social media, writing letters and calling out racism but do more - show up and participate in calls to action



## How to find the Apology Cairn at Laurentian University



The cairn is located in the green space in Parking Lot 15. This lot is not open to the public. The best locations to park are in Lots B (across from the Parker Building) and Lot C (in front of the West Residence). Parking is free on Saturdays and Sundays at Laurentian in the pay and display lots.

**This package and the accompanying video are dedicated to Stan MacKay, whose presentation to the Manitou Intentional Learning Community in April 2021 ignited this project.**

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