

Reconciliation is not a goal to be achieved, but a way of living together

Education for reconciliation requires new curriculum, resources, and time for Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers to work together in a spirit of mutual respect. But beyond that, it requires us all to participate in a personal and political process of decolonization.

That was the message from Dr. Paulette Regan to 350 teachers participating in the Aboriginal Education Professional Specialist Day at Fort Langley Elementary school.

Regan is Director of Research for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and the author of “Unsettling the Settler Within,” a powerful call to action for non-Indigenous Canadians to learn the truth about our shared history and to challenge the persistent national myth of ourselves as benevolent settlers and peacemakers.

“As non-Indigenous people we have to ask ourselves some troubling questions,” Regan said. “The testimony of the residential school survivors challenged the historical myths of Canadian nation building.”

The TRC has emphasized the crucial role that educators must play in the reconciliation process but, in order for schools to be a force for reconciliation, the education system itself must be transformed to reject the racism of colonial structures.

Regan emphasized the importance of educating the heart, as well as the mind. She called for “an unsettling pedagogy of history and hope” to enable us to confront uncomfortable truths.

“The survivors’ testimonies compelled us to think about what justice means in the face of mass human rights violations,” she said. She was “shaken to the core” by the “deeply unsettling testimony” she witnessed across the country.

Regan concluded: “The TRC gave us the framework for reconciliation, now it’s up to Canadians to do the hard work together.”

At the end of her presentation, Regan was honoured with a magnificent button blanket created by Tahltan/Tlingit artist Una-Ann Moyer, who works in the Langley school district.