



Letters from the LCC President

by Shauna Van Praagh

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One beautiful evening this summer, I invited myself to a free concert on the Wood Terrace of the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. The band was Beòlach, a Cape Breton quartet celebrating its 25th anniversary. The lively music of bagpipes, whistles, fiddles, piano and guitar was interspersed with spoken introductions to tunes (titles included “The Feeling of Free” and “Toss the Fiddler”) and a condensed lesson about Gaelic speaking Scots who brought their music with them to Cape Breton in the 18th and early 19th centuries. The musicians, all of Scots descent, were happy to share history, culture, and dynamic tradition. Members of the audience, aged 8 to late 80’s, were smiling and nodding, clapping and tapping, stamping and swaying – all invited to join enthusiastically in the rhythm and emotion and energy of the music.



The concert served as illustration of the ways in which music – tied to heritage, place, stories, and traditions – evolves over time, through instruments, and in the care of individual musicians. It is always changing and always rooted, always looking simultaneously to past and future. Its rhythm incorporates memory and connections; its melodies are shaped by ongoing improvisation and innovation.

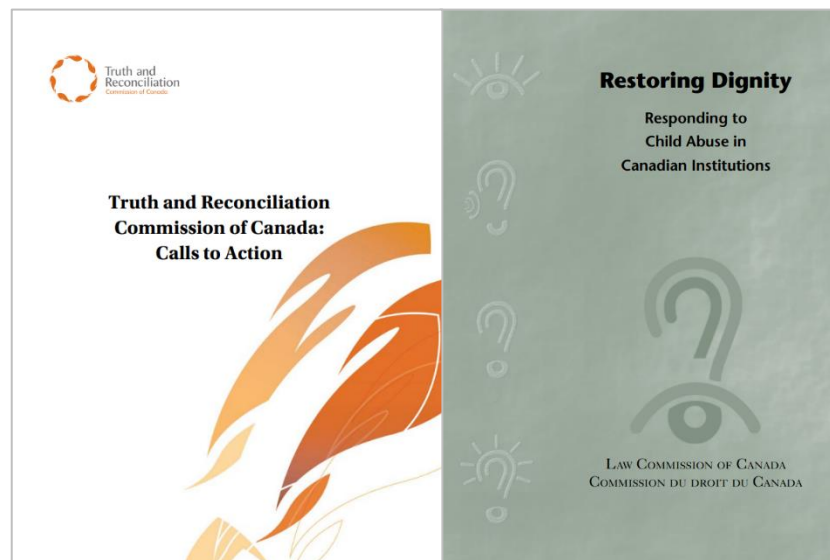
I recently read about, and look forward to listening to, a newly released recording of the words and music of the famous and much-missed American folk musician, Woody Guthrie. Entitled “Woody at Home”, the collection includes the observation – shared with and borrowed by Bob Dylan – that a song is never finished but always evolving. There’s no final end-product, which means there’s no reason to aspire for perfection. Instead, there’s ongoing participation and a generation-to-generation passing on of knowledge and experience and cadence.

If a song is always evolving, then perhaps so too are all the projects in which we immerse ourselves and that keep us going. The project of truth and reconciliation in Canada is an obvious example. This year, as we look ahead to Truth and Reconciliation Day, September 30th, we mark a decade since Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission issued its Final Report and 94 *Calls to Action*. As we celebrate this 10th anniversary, the Calls are still sounding, action is still required, commitments are still crucial. The rhythm continues, generation after generation.



For the Law Commission of Canada, this year marks a related 25th anniversary. In 2000, the LCC – operational from 1997 – 2006 – issued its first Report, entitled *Restoring Dignity: Responding to Child Abuse in Canadian Institutions*. The *Restoring Dignity* report offered a constructive and wide-ranging framework for understanding co-existing responses to institutional abuse, each with unique strengths in addressing the needs of individual survivors, families, communities and society. The report focused on “total institutions” for children (whether characterized as special needs schools, child welfare facilities, youth detention facilities or residential schools for Indigenous young people). It explored the range of individual and institutional actions and practices experienced by young people as abuse, and reviewed a broad spectrum of response mechanisms for providing redress – from criminal justice to civil liability, from children’s advocates to public inquiries, from community initiatives to compensation schemes. One of the mechanisms identified and described was that of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Today’s Law Commission of Canada has just launched a project to note this double anniversary – 10 years since the *Calls to Action* were issued by Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and 25 years since the publication of the *Restoring Dignity* report. Entitled *Intergenerational Conversations in Law: Marking the 10th Anniversary of the TRC Calls to Action*, this initiative



will support a series of intergenerational conversations between current law students and Elders or other experts in Indigenous legal traditions. Hosted by Canadian faculties of law over the 2025-2026 school year, the conversations are meant to foster learning about the evolution of Indigenous legal orders in Canada before and after the Calls to Action and Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In dialogue with students, participating Elders will be invited to reflect on challenges and opportunities as we look ahead. Short papers written by the students following the conversations will share what they heard and set out questions and hopes that frame the future.

Formal assessment of implementation of the Calls is crucial. But so are ongoing stories, finding ways to encourage and value conversations that inform and inspire young curious people keen to understand, reflect and make connections. The LCC’s newest project is one small way to acknowledge the role and responsibility of a federal agency dedicated to engaging with people across this land in the ongoing and dynamic evolution of law. The anticipated conversations

represent a way to make music together, to share rhythms and melodies as we pick up our instruments and join fellow music makers.

As I imagine the music of Truth and Reconciliation across this land, I share a concluding little story. I was recently at an evening of poetry and music, organized around the theme of harvest moon. It included a reading of Mary Oliver's poem, "Wild Geese".

*...Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.*



The reader paused and, at that very moment, everyone heard the geese flying overhead. They were honking together, right on cue, as they headed home tracing their southbound autumn path. The timing was perfect, the coincidence truly remarkable. Called to action, they inserted themselves in the poem, ready and willing to demonstrate - in compelling harmony and with confident rhythm – the meaning and promise of the words. Inspired by the Canadian geese heading home as September draws to an end, the Law Commission of Canada marks

Truth and Reconciliation Day (Orange Shirt Day) 2025 with a renewed commitment to listening and learning, making music, and aspiring to flight.