



Letters from the LCC President

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For the Law Commission of Canada, October brought with it celebration of the tabling in Parliament of our Annual Report prepared this past spring. Justifiably proud of the foundational work accomplished over our first ten months of operation, the LCC team is truly happy to share this document with the Canadian public.

In our Report, in a section entitled “What It Means to Shape Law Reform Today”, Canadians can find a list of elements identified by the Commission as relevant to the work of law reform in this country on the cusp of the second quarter of the 21st century. Those elements include increased appreciation for learning from Indigenous narratives, observable and destructive distrust of facts, and substantial engagement and empowerment of youth. As I reread the list, I realize it corresponds in important ways to our country’s focus on truth and reconciliation marked in a powerful way at the end of September.



On September 30th, Canada paused for Orange Shirt Day, more formally known as our National Day of Truth and Reconciliation. We were invited to remember, reflect, connect and learn. As the Honourable Murray Sinclair, Chief Commissioner of Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, wrote in an opinion piece published in The Globe and Mail in September, this day was “first envisioned...to be a day of listening, learning and discussion”, a day that offers “an opportunity to build relationships with each other – and most

importantly with survivors of Canada’s residential school system”.

September 28th, two days earlier, was World News Day. The communiqué issued to mark the day reminded readers that “Today, more than ever, journalism matters.” This year’s theme, phrased as an imperative directed to all of us, was “Choose Truth”. Journalists have a crucial responsibility in seeking truth and sharing stories. They can serve as leaders and key contributors to collective understanding and knowledge, wisdom and wellbeing.

The proximity of World News Day to Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Day prompts us to find ways to combine the messages: to learn from Indigenous narratives, to enrich our knowledge through facts and the search for truth, and to underscore support for and responsiveness to the needs and promise of people. The overlap with contemporary elements of meaningful law reform is both obvious and striking.



In recent Law Commission of Canada Listen and Learn meetings – in Victoria, British Columbia and in Halifax, Nova Scotia – we heard about ways in which remarkable individuals, communities and organizations are working to intertwine truth and justice, law and reconciliation. From one coast to another, we learned about complexity within communities, heard the challenges of responding to individual and collective needs and claims in effective ways, and were inspired by projects of restoring and strengthening traditions. The Indigenous Law Research Unit at the University of Victoria shared with us some of the initiatives, including a graphic novel, through which it motivates creative and curious engagement with Indigenous legal traditions and orders. The African Nova Scotian Justice Institute intertwines court support, restorative justice, and interactive legal education projects, all responsive to individual and community stories from past, present and future. The teams that run the Unit and the Institute stand out for their dynamism, innovation and energy. Their work, like that of so many actors in the law reform landscape, relies on truth-telling, engaged listening, and constructive conversation.

As the Law Commission continues to listen to and learn from actors including law schools, legal aid clinics, legal literacy and access to justice organizations, community institutions, professional regulators, the judiciary, criminal law enforcement, and policy makers, we notice a shared and foundational commitment to seeking and building on truth. There is an evident need for stories that reveal truth and for truths to inform the stories we tell. Perhaps the Law Commission can assist in asking what we do with truths as they are revealed, what differences might be made to the practice and approach taken by legal actors, and what responsibilities we have as Canadians to tell, value, and act upon truth.

The Commission's three-part *raison d'être*, Living Law, Pursuing Justice, Renewing Hope, does not include an explicit reference to Seeking Truth. But that doesn't mean truth isn't present. Instead, truth appears to be central to all three parts: we need true stories of law in our daily lives; investing in truth grounds the pursuit of justice; and hope for the future relies on understanding the truths of where we are and where we are headed. Projects and plans for law reform are always grounded in a collective embrace of the search for truth.

The coincidence of the last World News Day and the last National Truth and Reconciliation Day of the first quarter of the 21st century invites all of us to pause and reflect. As the Law Commission shares our first Annual Report with Canadians, we are already halfway through our second year and keen to incorporate the messages into our ongoing work. We focus on the significance of what Canadians have learned and continue to learn about law, justice and hope in their lives - whether through investigative analysis and critical comprehensive reporting and gathering, or through story telling and the sharing of individual and community narratives. We accept the World News Day imperative to "choose truth" in carrying out the vocation of law reform. And we anticipate continued building of relationships through the practices of listening, learning and discussion symbolized and motivated by the orange shirts worn across this country in the name of truth and reconciliation.