



**Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice**

*A national liberal religious organization founded in support of Unitarian values*

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President, Margaret Rao

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May 30, 2014

MP The Hon. Bernard Valcourt  
Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs,  
House of Commons, Ottawa, K1A 0A6

Dear Hon. Bernard Valcourt,

I am writing as a Canadian and as the President of Canadian Unitarians For Social Justice to express my concerns about the importance of coming to a fair arrangement with First Nations peoples in Canada regarding First Nations Education. We believe that a sound legislative framework for First Nations Education based on mutual respect is important. We believe such legislation should provide for:

- First Nations control over the operation of schools, the curriculum.
- Overall education standards that are equal to or better than recognized standards in Canada or in the relevant province.
- Quality review and evaluation of education services by a body that is controlled by First Nations people, using a process that will ensure that the evaluators who carry out the evaluation of any given school are suitably qualified and independent of the administration of that school.
- Equal per capita funding compared to provinces for First Nations schools, with appropriate additional funding in areas of high cost of living.
- Additional financial support for the strong development of First Nations culture and languages programs.
- The capacity for regional First Nations School Boards if there is a desire to collaborate.
- Additional funding to compensate for and to provide for the healing of social problems often found on reserves due to the impact of intergenerational trauma: fetal alcohol syndrome, drug and alcohol problems, impoverished environments; lack of adequate housing, and so on.
- Annual increases in funding large enough to cover the costs of a growing aboriginal population and an increasing student population as more students stay longer in school.

First Nations people are proving themselves to be very capable. If Canada is serious in its apology to First Nations, it will give them the respect, the authority, and the resources required to bring up and educate their children—both in their own culture and values—and with the capacity to succeed and thrive in Canada as well.

Sincerely yours,



Margaret Rao,  
President,  
Canadian Unitarians For Social Justice

cc. Prime Minister Stephen Harper  
The Hon. Thomas Mulcaire  
Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau  
Green Leader Elizabeth May