CANADIAN UNITARIAN COUNCIL
CONSEIL UNITARIEN DU CANADA

100-344 Dupont Street
Toronto, ON M5R 1V9
416-489-4121 (tel)
www.cuc.ca • info@cuc.ca
888-568-5723 (TOLL-FREE)

An Expression of Truth and Reconciliation

From the Canadian Unitarian Council and Unitarian Universalist Ministers of Canada

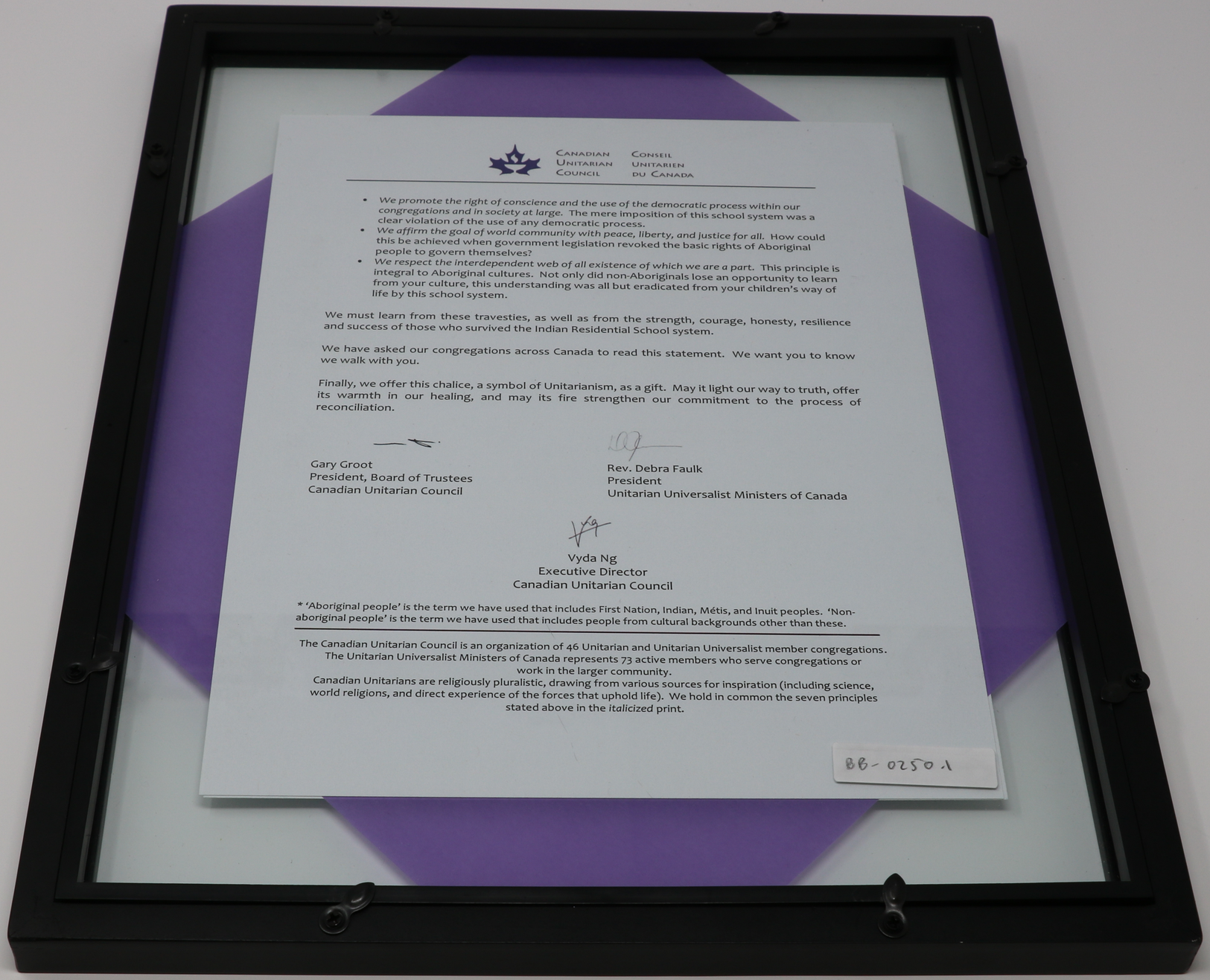
Delivered to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission
March 29, 2014 in Edmonton, Alberta

We, the Canadian Unitarian Council and the Unitarian Universalist Ministers of Canada, commit to the journey of healing and reconciliation between Canadian Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal people.* Today, as we acknowledge and accept our responsibility for truth-telling, healing and reconciliation, we commit to these specific steps to advance that journey:

1) To assemble and promote educational materials for our congregations regarding the history and impact of the Indian Residential School system.
2) To create and promote a new program for congregations about racial equity and intercultural competency.
3) To continue to encourage our congregations and their members to learn more about the richness of Aboriginal spirituality and cultures, working together to advance the struggle for justice for Aboriginal people.

To further express our understanding and commitment to change, we offer the following acknowledgement that the principles which Unitarian Universalists affirm were transgressed in the Canadian Indian Residential School system and by government legislation.

- *The inherent worth and dignity of every person.* This was denied when you were forced to relinquish your cultural identities and denied the nurturance of your families and communities.
- *We affirm justice, equity, and compassion in human relations.* These were violated when parents were forced to give up their children to a school system where so many children were emotionally, physically and sexually abused.
- *We seek to accept one another and encourage each other's spiritual growth.* This was disallowed when your spiritual practices were outlawed and another religious tradition imposed upon you.
- *We support a free and responsible search for truth and meaning.* Although many children received basic education, they were also used for manual labour, living in unsanitary conditions, leading to thousands of deaths from tuberculosis and other contagious diseases.



Canadian Unitarian Council — Conseil Unitarien du Canada

- *We promote the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large.* The mere imposition of this school system was a clear violation of the use of any democratic process.
- *We affirm the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all.* How could this be achieved when government legislation revoked the basic rights of Aboriginal people to govern themselves?
- *We respect the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.* This principle is integral to Aboriginal cultures. Not only did non-Aboriginals lose an opportunity to learn from your culture, this understanding was all but eradicated from your children's way of life by this school system.

We must learn from these travesties, as well as from the strength, courage, honesty, resilience and success of those who survived the Indian Residential School system.

We have asked our congregations across Canada to read this statement. We want you to know we walk with you.

Finally, we offer this chalice, a symbol of Unitarianism, as a gift. May it light our way to truth, offer its warmth in our healing, and may its fire strengthen our commitment to the process of reconciliation.

Gary Groot
President, Board of Trustees
Canadian Unitarian Council

Rev. Debra Faulk
President
Unitarian Universalist Ministers of Canada

Vyda Ng
Executive Director
Canadian Unitarian Council

* 'Aboriginal people' is the term we have used that includes First Nation, Indian, Métis, and Inuit peoples. 'Non-aboriginal people' is the term we have used that includes people from cultural backgrounds other than these.

The Canadian Unitarian Council is an organization of 46 Unitarian and Unitarian Universalist member congregations. The Unitarian Universalist Ministers of Canada represents 73 active members who serve congregations or work in the larger community.

Canadian Unitarians are religiously pluralistic, drawing from various sources for inspiration (including science, world religions, and direct experience of the forces that uphold life). We hold in common the seven principles stated above in the *italicized* print.

BB-0250.1