

# A Catholic Response to Call to Action 48 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

(On Adopting and Implementing the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*)

## 1. Introduction: The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada issued 94 Calls to Action almost a year ago. One of these called on all faith groups in Canada to “formally adopt and comply with the principles, norms, and standards of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* as a framework for reconciliation.”<sup>1</sup> Catholic Bishops, institutes of consecrated life, societies of apostolic life and other Catholic organizations in Canada support this Declaration and believe that its spirit can point a way forward to reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada. Further, the Holy See’s office that participates in the United Nations – the Holy See Permanent Observer to the UN – has explicitly endorsed this Declaration on numerous occasions.<sup>2,3,4,5</sup>

The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* was passed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2007. Technically known as a “human rights instrument” rather than a treaty or convention, once passed it is not signed or ratified. Since it is directed to the governments of nation states, the Declaration does not, in the strict sense, refer to churches or faith groups. But this does not mean that churches and faith groups cannot seek to live out its principles. Because churches and faith groups are an integral part of the society for which the government speaks and acts, it is important for us to make our voices heard.

The central themes of the Declaration, in fact, resonate strongly with statements already made by the Catholic Church, whether through the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB) or the Holy See. These include the rights of Indigenous Peoples to self-determination, self-government, and to their own distinct institutions, the right to their traditional territories, the right to a fair process to adjudicate land claims, the right to their cultural traditions and customs, the right to practise and manifest their spiritual traditions and customs, the right to maintain their languages, the right to their own educational institutions, the right to improvement of their economic and social conditions, the right to guide their own development, and the right to the recognition and enforcement of treaties.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, 2015. Call to Action n. 48.

<sup>2</sup> Address by Archbishop Celestino Migliore, Holy See Permanent Observer to the UN, New York, May 16, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Address by Archbishop Celestino Migliore, Holy See Permanent Observer to the UN, New York, October 19, 2009.

<sup>4</sup> Address by Archbishop Celestino Migliore, Holy See Permanent Observer to the UN, New York, 20 April 2010

<sup>5</sup> Address by Archbishop Silvano Tomasi, Holy See Permanent Observer to the UN, Geneva, September 17, 2014.

<sup>6</sup> See the attached appendix for a list of some Catholic statements supporting the rights articulated in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

## 2. Respecting Indigenous Spiritual Practices

One of those principles that touches on the life and mission of the Catholic Church is articulated in article 12(1) of the Declaration, which states that “Indigenous people have the right to manifest, practise, develop and teach their spiritual and religious traditions, customs, and ceremonies.” The failure to uphold this right is a theme found throughout the TRC’s Final Report. While the Catholic Church proclaims Jesus Christ, “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14.6), she also has a long, but scarcely known, history of forbidding religious coercion. Unfortunately, this teaching has not always been lived out by some of the Church’s own members, including clergy who had significant influence on the faithful.<sup>7</sup>

From the beginnings of contact between Europeans and Indigenous peoples there are reports of missionaries who, aided and encouraged by colonial powers, coerced Indigenous people to be baptized and become members of the Catholic Church. This became common enough that, already in 1537, Pope Paul III raised his voice to reject this practice, declaring that the evangelization of Indigenous peoples should only take place “by preaching the word of God and by the example of good and holy living.”<sup>8</sup> Thus the Church’s Code of Canon Law has long insisted that an adult was not to be baptized unless the person desired it and knew what was involved.<sup>9</sup> As later clearly articulated by the Second Vatican Council’s Declaration on Religious Freedom, “it is one of the major tenets of Catholic doctrine that man’s response to God in faith must be free: no one therefore is to be forced to embrace the Christian faith against his own will.”<sup>10</sup> That same Council also urged that “in spreading religious faith and in introducing religious practices everyone ought at all times to refrain from any manner of action which might seem to carry a hint of coercion or of a kind of persuasion that would be dishonorable or unworthy.”<sup>11</sup>

Although many priests, brothers, sisters, and laypeople served in the residential schools with generosity, faithfulness, care, and respect for their students, this was not always the case. The TRC Final Report rightly observes that when Christians, through the residential schools, belittled Indigenous students as “pagans”<sup>12</sup> or “demonized, punished, and terrorized them into accepting Christian beliefs,”<sup>13</sup> this was in fundamental contradiction to the core beliefs of Christianity.<sup>14</sup> While Christians have at times failed to live up to the standard to which they are called by God, the glaring failures to respect the identity and freedom of Indigenous children outlined in the TRC Final report are particularly saddening and must never be repeated.

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<sup>7</sup> For example, in its *Apology to the First Nations of Canada* (1992), p. 2, the Oblate Conference of Canada recognized its “past dismissal of many of the riches of native religious tradition. We broke some of your peace pipes and we considered some of your sacred practices as pagan and superstitious. . . . We apologize for this blindness and disrespect.”

<sup>8</sup> Paul III, Bull *Sublimis Deus*, June 2, 1537.

<sup>9</sup> *Codex Iuris Canonici* (1917), canon 752 §1.

<sup>10</sup> Second Vatican Council, Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis Humanae*, 1965. N. 10.

<sup>11</sup> Second Vatican Council, Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis Humanae*, 1965. N. 4.

<sup>12</sup> TRC Final Report, vol. 6, 98.

<sup>13</sup> TRC Final Report, vol. 6, 97.

<sup>14</sup> TRC Final Report, vol. 6, 98. “That Christians in Canada, in the name of their religion, inflicted serious harms on Aboriginal children, their families, and their communities was in fundamental contradiction to what they purported their core beliefs to be.”

In 2012, the Permanent Council of the CCCB issued a Pastoral Letter on Freedom of Conscience and Religion, declaring that:

Every individual has the ‘the right to be able to worship God in accordance with the right dictates of his conscience.’ [Saint John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris* 14]. Other people, as well as civil society, have the corresponding duty to respect the free spiritual development of each person. Besides being free from external coercion, everyone must be able freely to exercise the right to choose, profess, disseminate, and practice his or her own religion in private and in public. This includes the freedom for parents to educate their children in their religious convictions and to choose the schools which provide that formation. Moreover, the state has the obligation to protect this right by means of a legal and administrative framework and to create a suitable environment where it can be enjoyed.<sup>15</sup>

The Catholic Church does not claim these rights for Christians only, but for all people – including those choosing to follow Indigenous forms of spirituality and religious belief. To do otherwise would run contrary to the Church’s mission. As the Bishops of Canada declared in 2012, “no individual, human community or state should ever forget that the truth never imposes itself by violence but only ‘by the force of its own truth.’ No religion, therefore, can ever be externally imposed but must be adopted by a person ‘only through the process of conviction’.”<sup>16</sup>

The TRC Final Report points out that when it comes to Christianity, some Indigenous people “believe that Indigenous spirituality and Western religion should coexist on separate but parallel paths,”<sup>17</sup> whereas “Aboriginal Christians who also practise Indigenous spirituality seek Indigenous and Christian spiritual and religious coexistence within the churches themselves.”<sup>18</sup> In the case of those who hold to Indigenous spirituality apart from Christianity, the Catholic Church approaches them as we would the followers of any other religion: with humility, respect, and the invitation to a sincere dialogue.<sup>19</sup> As the CCCB’s Commission for the Evangelization of Peoples wrote in 1999, “As bishops, we respect your ancestral customs and spiritual heritage. We also respect those among you who have found in contemporary expressions of these traditions ways to revere the power of God present in all of Creation. We renew our commitment to the dialogue that has begun between our

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<sup>15</sup> Permanent Council of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Pastoral Letter on Freedom of Conscience and Religion* (2012), n. 5.

<sup>16</sup> Permanent Council of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Pastoral Letter on Freedom of Conscience and Religion* (2012), n. 6. Internal citations are respectively from *Dignitatis Humanae*, n. 1 and Pope Benedict XVI’s Address to the Roman Curia, December 22, 2005.

<sup>17</sup> TRC Final Report, vol. 6, 105.

<sup>18</sup> TRC Final Report, vol. 6, 106.

<sup>19</sup> For example, the Second Vatican Council declared that “The Church, therefore, exhorts her sons, that through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, carried out with prudence and love and in witness to the Christian faith and life, they recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among these men” (*Nostra Aetate* n. 2).

respective spiritual heritages.”<sup>20</sup> In the case of those who seek to live an authentically Indigenous Catholicism, the Church acknowledges that in many ways and places in the past, Indigenous people were encouraged to leave totally behind their spirituality, ceremonies and rituals. In recent years, many Indigenous people, while holding firmly to their faith in Jesus Christ whom they had come to know, have expressed the desire to claim and publicly practise Indigenous spiritual traditions as well. As bringer of the Gospel, the Church stands ready to support, to encourage, to offer its counsel, and to learn, as this process of the Gospel’s inculturation takes place.

By rejecting all forms of religious coercion, and acknowledging the suffering caused by it, the Catholic Church not only seeks to uphold a basic human right, but to carry out its mission, which is not to force anyone to convert but to propose to all peoples the beauty of knowing Jesus Christ. Christianity, however, is not itself a culture and is therefore expressed in many ways, with each receiving culture contributing something new and beautiful. For almost five centuries now, uniquely Indigenous spiritual expressions have been part of Catholicism in the Americas, beginning most notably with the appearance of Our Lady of Guadalupe to Saint Juan Diego, an Indigenous Aztec, in 1531 when the Mother of God appeared to Juan as an Indigenous woman, speaking to him in his own Nahuatl language.<sup>21</sup> That process needs to continue with Indigenous Catholics in Canada, and has been taking place in our parishes and dioceses in a more concentrated way in the past 25 years.

During his 1984 pastoral visit to Canada, Saint John Paul II reiterated this appreciation for Indigenous spiritual expression as well as the importance of Indigenous people taking on their rightful responsibilities:

Your encounter with the Gospel has not only enriched you, it has enriched the Church. We are well aware that this has not taken place without its difficulties and, occasionally, even mistakes. . . . In addition, your Aboriginal and Inuit traditions permit the development of new ways of expressing the message of salvation and they help us to better understand to what point Jesus is the Savior and how Catholic or universal his salvation is.... The Bishops' Synod on 'Justice in the World' (1971) stated that every people should, in mutual cooperation, fashion its own economic and social development and that each people should take part in bringing about the universal common good as active and responsible members of human society. It is in this perspective that you must be the architects of your own future, freely, and responsibly. May the wisdom of your elders unite with the initiative and courage of your youth to meet this challenge!<sup>22</sup>

In considering the unique contributions made by Indigenous Catholics, the Catholic Bishops of Canada wrote in 1993:

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<sup>20</sup> *Rediscovering, Recognizing, and Celebrating the Spiritual Heritage of Canada's Aboriginal Peoples*, Pastoral Message to the Native Peoples of Canada by the CCCB Episcopal Commission for the Evangelization of Peoples, 1999.

<sup>21</sup> The earliest account of this event is recorded in the *Nican Mopohua*, an account written in Nahuatl no later than 1556.

<sup>22</sup> John Paul II, Speech to Aboriginal and Inuit Peoples, Shrine of Saint-Anne de Beaupré, September 10, 1984.

Native Peoples who are members of our Church live their cultural values, both religious and social, within the tradition of the Catholic faith. The Church appreciates this development of a Native Catholic spirituality and a Native expression of Catholicism. This spirituality is characterized by an innate harmony with all of creation and all peoples, by the importance it attaches to individual and community healing, and by the conviction of a need for greater justice. All of these traits of Native spirituality are present in a particular way in the Church because of the contributions of Native Peoples by their presence and spirituality.<sup>23</sup>

### **3. Publicly Supporting the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples***

In 2007, the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* was adopted by the United Nations. The Government of Canada at the time expressed reservations, particularly with respect to the concept and possible implications of “free, prior, and informed consent”. Later, in 2010, the Government did issue a conditional statement of support for the Declaration and so reaffirmed “its commitment to promoting and protecting the rights of Indigenous peoples at home and abroad”, while also noting its confidence “that Canada can interpret the principles expressed in the Declaration in a manner that is consistent with our Constitution and legal framework.”<sup>24</sup> Earlier in 2010, when the Government had announced that it would support the Declaration, the CCCB President signed a Church leaders’ letter issued by Kairos (an ecumenical coalition of which the CCCB is a member) to several government ministers, acknowledging appreciation for the government’s endorsement and urging the Canadian government “to work in partnership with Indigenous peoples on a respectful process for the full endorsement and implementation of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.”<sup>25</sup>

As a follow-up to the Declaration, the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples was held in September 2014, and produced an Outcome Document. Once again, the Government of Canada objected to possible implications of the wording used in this Document about the “free, prior, and informed consent” of Indigenous peoples regarding projects that would affect them or their lands, territories, or resources. On April 17, 2015, the President of the CCCB sent a letter, drafted in collaboration with the Canadian Catholic Aboriginal Council, to Prime Minister Stephen Harper asking the Federal Government to offer continued support to the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, as well as the Outcome Document (cf. attached). The letter made special mention of the necessity for

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<sup>23</sup> *Let Justice Flow Like a Mighty River: Brief by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (1993), p. 24.

<sup>24</sup> “Canada’s Statement of Support on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples”, November 12, 2010 {<http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1309374239861/1309374546142>}.

<sup>25</sup> Kairos Church Leaders’ Letter to Federal Ministers Lawrence Cannon (Foreign Affairs), James Moore (Canadian Heritage), and Chuck Strahl (Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians), June 9, 2010.

Indigenous Peoples – both in Canada and abroad – to have a say in development projects that affect them and their traditional territories, in particular concerning resource extraction.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* represents “a standard of achievement to be pursued in a spirit of partnership and mutual respect.”<sup>26</sup> It provides Canadians with an important set of signposts in their journey onward to reconciliation. The Catholic Church in Canada is not a national Church. Each diocese, institute of consecrated life and society of apostolic life has its own proper autonomy, while united in the communion of faith and love. While there is not a corporate policy common to all Catholic dioceses, institutes of consecrated life, societies of apostolic life and lay organizations, we the undersigned reiterate the teaching of the Catholic Church on the universality of human rights, particularly the right to freedom of religion and belief. We echo here the 2009 statement of the Holy See Permanent Observer on the Declaration’s importance for guiding interactions between states and Indigenous peoples: “Pertinent initiatives should be guided by principles of respect for the identity and culture of indigenous populations. Understanding and respecting their cultural traditions, religious consciousness and their long-standing ability to decide and control their development programs foster better interaction and cooperation between peoples and governments.”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, preamble.

<sup>27</sup> Address by Archbishop Celestino Migliore, Holy See Permanent Observer to the UN, New York, October 19, 2009.

## Walking Forward Together

The Truth and Reconciliation Report stresses that a recognition of past wrongs ought to be accompanied by a practical commitment to heal enduring injustices. As representatives of the Catholic faithful in Canada, and counting on the full collaboration of the Canadian Catholic Aboriginal Council, we appeal to all our Catholic brothers and sisters -- laity, members of institutes of consecrated life and of societies of apostolic life, deacons, priests, and Bishops -- to make their own the following commitments, as recommended by the Commission for Justice and Peace of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, in the hope and desire to continue to walk together with Indigenous Peoples in building a more just society where their gifts and those of all people are nurtured and honoured:

1. Continue to work with Catholic educational institutions and programs of formation in learning to tell the history of Canada in a way that is truthful, ensuring proper treatment of the history and experience of Indigenous Peoples, including the experience of oppression and marginalization which resulted from the Indian Act, the Residential School system, and frequent ignoring or undermining of signed treaties.
2. Work with centres of pastoral and clergy formation to promote a culture of encounter by including the study of the history of Canadian missions, with both their weaknesses and strengths, which encompasses the history of the Indian Residential Schools. In doing this, it will be important to be attentive to Indigenous versions of Canadian history, and for these centres to welcome and engage Indigenous teachers in the education of clergy and pastoral workers, assuring that each student has the opportunity to encounter Indigenous cultures as part of their formation.
3. Call upon theological centres to promote and continue to support Indigenous reflection within the Catholic community, and include this as part of the national ecumenical and interreligious dialogues in which the CCCB is involved.
4. Encourage partnerships between Indigenous groups and existing health care facilities to provide holistic health care, especially in areas where there are significant health needs.
5. Encourage initiatives that would establish and strengthen a restorative justice model within the criminal justice system. Incarceration rates among Indigenous people are many times higher than among the general population, and prisons are not sufficiently places of reconciliation and rehabilitation. Such initiatives include the renewal of the criminal justice system through sentencing and healing circles and other traditional Indigenous ways of dealing with offenders where appropriate and desired by Indigenous Peoples.


6. Support the current national inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and work with others towards a healthier society where just relations flourish in families and communities, and where those most vulnerable are protected and valued.
7. Support Bishops and their dioceses and eparchies, as well as superiors of institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life, together with lay Catholic organizations, in deepening and broadening their relationships, dialogue and collaboration with Indigenous Peoples; in developing programs of education on Indigenous experience and culture; and in their efforts to continue to move forward with renewed hope following the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Final Report and its Calls to Action, especially those that address faith communities.
8. Encourage Bishops, as well as the superiors of institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life , together with lay Catholic organizations, to invite a greater acquaintance with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* in their dioceses and eparchies, in their parishes and educational institutions, and in their communities and pastoral work, thus fostering continuing reflection in local contexts on how various aspects of the Declaration can be implemented or supported.

March 19, 2016

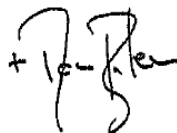
Solemnity of Saint Joseph, husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary  
Principal patron of Canada



## Catholic Signatories



Most Rev. Douglas Crosby, O.M.I.  
Bishop of Hamilton and President,  
Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops



Most. Rev. Donald Bolen  
Bishop of Saskatoon and Chairman,  
CCCB Commission for Justice and Peace



Deacon Rennie Nahanee  
Chair, Canadian Catholic Aboriginal Council



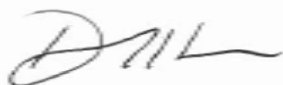
Sister Rita Larrivée, S.S.A.  
President, Canadian Religious Conference



Deacon Jean-Denis Lampron  
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for Development and Peace



Rev. Timothy Scott, C.S.B.  
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Mr. David Leduc  
Executive Director, Canadian Catholic  
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## **Appendix: Some Catholic Statements supporting Indigenous rights articulated in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples***

### **The right of Indigenous Peoples to self-determination, self-government, and their own distinct institutions (*Declaration* articles 3-5)**

- *Let Justice Flow Like a Mighty River*, Brief by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1993 [hereafter cited as *Let Justice Flow*], 34 (“We will continue to support the rights of Aboriginal Peoples to self-government and a just resolution of land claims.”)
- John Paul II, Address to Native Peoples of Canada at Fort Simpson, 20 September 1987, n. 4 (“Once again I affirm the right to a just and equitable measure of self-government, along with a land base and adequate resources necessary for developing a viable economy for present and future generations.”)

### **The right of Indigenous Peoples to their traditional territories (*Declaration* article 26)**

- John Paul II, Radio and Television Message to the Native Peoples of Canada, Yellowknife airport, 18 September 1984, n. 8 (“For you a land-base with adequate resources is also necessary for developing a viable economy for present and future generations.”)
- John Paul II, Address to Native Peoples of Canada at Fort Simpson, 20 September 1987, n. 4 (“Once again I affirm the right to a just and equitable measure of self-government, along with a land base and adequate resources necessary for developing a viable economy for present and future generations.”)
- John Paul II, *Ecclesia in America* n. 64 (“Every attempt to marginalize the indigenous peoples must be eliminated. This means, first of all, respecting their territories and the pacts made with them.”)
- Address by Bernardito Auza, Holy See Permanent Observer to the UN, 19 October 2015 (“we call on international, national and local policymakers and movers to respect the Indigenous Peoples’ rights to their homelands and their natural resources.”)

### **The right to a fair process to adjudicate land claims (*Declaration* article 27)**

- *Let Justice Flow*, 34 (“We will continue to support the rights of Aboriginal Peoples to self-government and a just resolution of land claims.”)
- *Let Justice Flow*, 35 (recommending that the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples “take concrete steps to ensure federal and provincial mechanisms for a just settlement of land claims and for self-government.”)
- The need for fair and just processes to determine land claims has been outlined by the CCCB in numerous letters to the federal government:
  - November 28, 1969 (from the CCCB President to the Government of Canada);
  - March 21, 1986 and June 12, 1986 (to the Prime Minister from the Chair of the CCCB Social Affairs Commission);
  - August 24, 1990 (to Mohawks, Quebec and Federal governments from Chair of CCCB Social Affairs Commission);
  - August 28, 1990 (to Prime Minister from Chair of CCCB Social Affairs Commission).

**The right of Indigenous people to their cultural traditions and customs (*Declaration* articles 11, 15)**

- John Paul II, Address to Native Peoples of Canada at Fort Simpson, 20 September 1987, n. 3 (“Today I repeat those words to you, and to all the Aboriginal peoples of Canada and of the world. The Church extols the equal human dignity of all peoples and defends their right to uphold their own cultural character with its distinct traditions and customs.”)
- John Paul II, Homily at Mass at Fort Simpson, 20 September 1987 (“As native peoples you are faced with a supreme test: that of promoting the religious, cultural and social values that will uphold your human dignity and ensure your future well-being. Your sense of sharing, your understanding of human community rooted in the family, the highly valued relationships between your elders and your young people, your spiritual view of creation which calls for responsible care and protection of the environment - all of these traditional aspects of your way of life need to be preserved and cherished.”)

**The right of Indigenous people to practice and manifest their spiritual traditions and customs (*Declaration* article 12)**

- *Let Justice Flow* 34-35 (“We will set up the means of affirming the dignity of Aboriginal Peoples in the Church, of fostering an understanding of their cultural and spiritual traditions. . . . We will continue to explore the possibility of establishing channels of communication between our own spiritual heritage and Aboriginal spiritualities.”)
- *Rediscovering, Recognizing, and Celebrating the Spiritual Heritage of Canada’s Aboriginal Peoples*, Pastoral Message to the Native Peoples of Canada by the CCCB Episcopal Commission for the Evangelization of Peoples, 1999 (“As bishops, we respect your ancestral customs and spiritual heritage. We also respect those among you who have found in contemporary expressions of these traditions ways to revere the power of God present in all of Creation. . . . the Church encourages all its members to recognize, preserve and promote the spiritual, moral and cultural values found within your traditions and to work together with you in a spirit of prudent and charitable dialogue and collaboration.”)
- Address by Celestino Migliore, Holy See Permanent Observer to the UN, 20 April 2010 (“In addition to the economic dimension, development must include also social, cultural and spiritual elements. Their [Indigenous Peoples] deep sense of religious consciousness, of family and of community cohesiveness and desire for living in a strong symbiosis with nature must be respected.”)

**The right of Indigenous Peoples to maintain their languages (*Declaration* article 13)**

- Address by Celestino Migliore, Holy See Permanent Observer to the UN, 20 April 2010 (“preserving their cultural heritage, promotion of indigenous languages and intercultural education is critical. In this spirit, the Holy See promotes centers of indigenous languages, oversees compiling of grammar books and commissions hundreds of translations into those languages, often menaced by natural extinction.”)
- Address by Celestino Migliore, Holy See Permanent Observer to the UN, 21 May 2003 (“the international community should recognize and respect the primary responsibility of the indigenous family as the basic unit of their own society to educate their children from infancy to adolescence, in their own language and according to their own cultures and values”)
- John Paul II, Radio and Television Message to the Native Peoples of Canada, Yellowknife airport, 18 September 1984, n. 3 (“the missionaries have always shared in your cultural and social life. In keeping with the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, they have striven with greater awareness to show you, as the Church earnestly desires, ever greater respect for your patrimony, your language and your customs.”)

### **The right of Indigenous Peoples to their own educational institutions (*Declaration article 14*)**

- Address by Celestino Migliore, Holy See Permanent Observer to the UN, 21 May 2003 (“the international community should recognize and respect the primary responsibility of the indigenous family as the basic unit of their own society to educate their children from infancy to adolescence, in their own language and according to their own cultures and values, based on effective indigenous pedagogies. Access to education should comprise, wherever appropriate, alternative learning structures, expanded vocational training and innovative methods aimed at increasing practical and professional skills of indigenous youth. For every indigenous child, an education based on core spiritual, moral and ethical values is an indispensable tool for his or her own integral development.”)

### **The right of Indigenous Peoples to improvement of their economic and social conditions (*Declaration article 21*)**

- *Let Justice Flow* 34 (“We will continue to dialogue and journey with the Aboriginal Peoples as they continue . . . their quest for social and economic justice. . . . We reaffirm our commitment to working with other Churches and with Aboriginal Peoples for economic, social and constitutional justice.”)
- John Paul II, Address to Native Peoples of Canada at Fort Simpson, 20 September 1987, n. 4 (“Once again I affirm the right to a just and equitable measure of self-government, along with a land base and adequate resources necessary for developing a viable economy for present and future generations.”)

### **The right of Indigenous Peoples to guide their own development (*Declaration articles 23, 32*)**

- Address by Celestino Migliore, Holy See Permanent Observer to the UN, New York, 22 October 2003 (“First, right to development is inherent in every person, group or nation and the world's 370 million indigenous people have the same claim to development as all the rest; Second, development, for it to be truly human, should be integral, comprising all its multidimensional aspects: economic and social, political and cultural, moral and spiritual; it has to be both individual and collective, personal and shared; above all, it should be all of these cohesively and harmoniously together; Third, the indigenous people themselves must be architects of their own development.”)
- Address by Bernardito Auza, Holy See Permanent Observer to the UN, New York, 20 October 2014 (“the Holy See suggests that agreed Post-2015 outcome documents must also pay due attention to the situation of indigenous peoples, and that all eventual initiatives concerning them should be inspired and guided by the principle of respect for their identity and cultures, . . . and ability to decide their own development in cooperation with their respective national governments and the relevant international bodies”)
- Address by Bernardito Auza, Holy See Permanent Observer to the UN, New York, 19 October 2015 (“my delegation wishes to underline once more that the realization of the right to development of the Indigenous Peoples must be as much as possible coherent and harmonious with their specific identity and values. This can only be assured if the indigenous peoples themselves have a say in their own development.”)

### **The right to the recognition and enforcement of treaties (*Declaration article 37*)**

- Letter from Northern Bishops to the Prime Minister asking that treaty rights be included in the new constitution (17 November 1981)
- John Paul II, *Ecclesia in America* n. 64 (“Every attempt to marginalize the indigenous peoples must be eliminated. This means, first of all, respecting their territories and the pacts made with them.”)