

Faith in the Declaration Coalition Statement for National Indigenous Peoples Day
June 21, 2023

On this National Indigenous Peoples Day, faith communities and organizations affirm our on-going support for the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act. Today, two years after the adoption of this critical and historic legislation, the government is tabling the first National Action Plan. It is well past time to move towards right relationships with Indigenous Peoples of this land.

Call to Action #48 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) counsels all faith groups in Canada to formally adopt and comply with the principles, norms, and standards of the Declaration as a framework for reconciliation. In this spirit, our support for Declaration legislation is an expression of our commitment to reconciliation with humility. This commitment is part of wider efforts by faith communities to decolonize our minds and hearts, to work against racism, and to develop just relationships. As faith communities, we recognize that we must address our past institutional histories and involvements, and also act for constructive change to the laws and regulations of the state.

We recognize the National Action Plan as another important step on the journey towards the full implementation of the Declaration. We recognize the work ahead to ensure that all levels of government in Canada respect Indigenous Peoples' right of self-determination, including the right to free, prior, and informed consent. We acknowledge that critical issues of land, sovereignty, governance, and restitution still require urgent attention.

Just last year, referencing the 1948 UN Genocide Convention, the House of Commons unanimously recognized that genocide took place as part of the Indian Residential System. When our elected officials officially recognize genocide, when we repudiate the doctrine of discovery and other discriminatory doctrines, we encourage everyone to participate in what may be uncomfortable discussions, while inviting us all to stay grounded in the respect of human rights.

Faith communities worked relentlessly in past years to support the passage of Bill C-15, The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act. Our commitment to truth, justice, and reconciliation did not end with the passing of this legislation. As part of our desire for truth and reconciliation, faith communities will continue to walk with Indigenous Peoples to encourage the full implementation of the Declaration, and the bona fide honouring and implementation of Indigenous rights in the National Action Plan and beyond. The urgent climbing to justice and reconciliation pointed out by the TRC has only just begun.

This statement endorsed by:

Anglican Church of Canada - Indigenous Ministries

Canadian Baptists of Western Canada

Canadian Friends Service Committee

Le Centre Oblat: A Voice for Justice

Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Canada

Indigenous Ministries – Christian Reformed Church in Canada

Jesuits of Canada

Mennonite Central Committee

Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Notre-Dame du Cap Province

Office of Religious Congregations for Integral Ecology

The Presbyterian Church in Canada

