

# *Truth and Reconciliation*

## **A Guide for Canadian Quakers**



*We have this incredible opportunity before us to develop and nurture relations of mutual respect between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.*

*- Chief Wilton Littlechild, TRC Commissioner*

*Canadian Friends Service Committee, Autumn 2015*

# *Truth and Reconciliation*

## **A Guide for Canadian Quakers**

### **Contents:**

CYM Minute on Reconciliation .....	3
Background information on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission .....	4 - 5
Background information on the Doctrine of Discovery .....	6 - 8
Queries for Friends, Meetings, and Study Groups .....	9
Reflections of Canadian Friends: <i>What does reconciliation mean to me?</i> .....	10
Selected Calls to Action for faith groups .....	11 - 12

### **Additional Resources**

- a. CFSC Media Release Welcoming the Report of the TRC
- b. Coalition for the Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples Media Release
- c. Statement of the UN Secretary-General on the release of the TRC



Canadian Friends  
Service Committee  
(QUAKERS)  
[www.quakerservice.ca](http://www.quakerservice.ca)

*For more information, or to arrange a CFSC visit to your Meeting, social concerns committee, or study group, please contact Quaker Indigenous Rights Coordinator, Jennifer Preston: [jennifer@quakerservice.ca](mailto:jennifer@quakerservice.ca) or 416-920-5213*

## Canadian Yearly Meeting Minute on Truth and Reconciliation (2015-08-33)

Friends across the country have engaged in and have been moved by the years of work by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The TRC is part of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, a negotiated settlement addressing abuse claims of survivors against the government and churches. The TRC is an independent body that provided space for survivors of residential schools to share their experiences and participate in a process of truth, healing and reconciliation.

May 31 – June 3 2015 marked the formal closing events of the TRC in Ottawa. Many Friends were present at these events. CYM was represented by the Presiding Clerk and the staff of the Quaker Indigenous Rights Committee (QIRC) of CFSC.<sup>1</sup>

We heard from Chief Commissioner Justice Murray Sinclair: “We have described for you a mountain, we have shown you the path to the top. We call upon you to do the climbing.” These passionate words accompanied the handing over of the Commissioners’ report.

Reconciliation, as Commissioner Chief Wilton Littlechild noted, asks all involved to “open your mind and be willing to learn, and to link arms with Indigenous Peoples as we work together to heal and secure a better future.”

Let us honour the painful truths embodied in the report by actively working for the reconciliation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. We acknowledge our previous minutes on the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and Repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery<sup>2</sup> - actions requested in the TRC’s Calls to Action. We appreciate reconciliation is an ongoing process and not a one-time event. As Friends, we are committed to walk this journey. The Calls to Action include Calls specifically to Faith bodies.

Friends discussed reconciliation during our sessions this week. We urge individual Friends to read the Report of the TRC and the Calls to Action and listen expectantly to the Spirit for guidance on what steps they may be personally led to take.

We encourage Monthly Meetings and Worship Groups to engage with the materials shared by the Quaker Indigenous Rights Committee and prayerfully consider what actions they may take in working for reconciliation in their communities. We welcome the QIRC/CFSC offer to assist us with our journey and look forward to a Minute on our progress when we meet next summer.

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<sup>1</sup> Videos from TRC closing events on the Doctrine of Discovery and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples organized by CFSC can be found at <http://quakerservice.ca/our-work/indigenous-peoples-rights/canada-based-work/#sthash.nm2Bshoa.WkpYjN1z.dpbs> and <http://quakerservice.ca/our-work/indigenous-peoples-rights/canada-based-work/#sthash.6hRDE7gD.dpbs>

<sup>2</sup> <http://quakerservice.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Doctrine-of-Discovery-minute-and-background-August-2013.pdf>

## **Background information on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission**

### ***What were Indian Residential Schools?***

From 1870-1996 the Canadian government funded over 300 church-run Indian Residential Schools (IRS) for Aboriginal children. The purpose of the schools was to assimilate Aboriginal children into Canadian society and to “Kill the Indian in the child.” Institutional assimilation resulted in loss of spirituality, culture, language, and the fragmentation of families and communities. Children would often not see their homes for months or even years. Many children experienced different forms of abuse while attending these schools. The experience of residential schools left widespread trauma and intergenerational impacts affecting parents and children of attenders and their communities. Many Canadians do not know or understand this history.

### ***Where does the Truth and Reconciliation Commission come into it?***

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) is part of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA), which was the outcome of a negotiated settlement dealing with abuse claims of survivors against government and churches. Negotiated between former students, churches, the government, the Assembly of First Nations, and other Aboriginal organizations, the IRSSA was implemented in 2007, with the Commission being carried out from 2010-2015.

### ***What did the Commission aim to do?***

The TRC aimed to, “Guide and inspire Aboriginal peoples and Canadians in a process of truth and healing on a path leading toward reconciliation and renewed relationships based on mutual understanding and respect.”

### ***What did the Commission accomplish?***

The TRC was an independent body designed to provide a space for survivors of residential schools and those affected by them to come forward and share their experiences and participate in a process of truth, healing and reconciliation. The TRC differs from other Truth Commissions in other countries as it focuses specifically on children. The objectives of the TRC included: the creation of a public historical record of the policies and operations of residential schools, a record of children’s experiences, a public report including recommendations to all parties of the Settlement Agreement, supporting the Commemoration Initiative, the establishment of a National Research Centre and the hosting of seven national events.

In June 2015, the TRC completed its mandate and issued its final report, including 94 Calls to Action. These sweeping recommendations are crucial to meaningful reconciliation in Canada. However, as stated by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, “Truth-telling is important but not sufficient for reconciliation.”<sup>1</sup> If the TRC is to be successful in its work, people and governments across Canada must take up these calls to action.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.un.org/sg/statements/index.asp?nid=8694>

### ***What is a 'Truth and Reconciliation Commission'?***

A truth and reconciliation commission is a type of restorative justice that focuses on healing the relationships between the parties, rather than aiming to punish the guilty, the way the customary adversarial justice system works. Seeking the truth and acknowledging what happened allows for mourning, forgiveness and healing of relationships.

### ***Why are Quakers involved?***

The Quakers were not one of the churches that ran residential schools, and are not part of the legal agreement. However, the Government of Canada acted on behalf of *all* Canadians when they supported residential schools through policies and financing. It is therefore very important that not just signatory church members that take part. All citizens of Canada have benefitted by settler invasion, occupation of Indigenous territories, and usurpation of resources and oppression of Indigenous Peoples.

### ***What can we do now?***

Residential Schools are a part of the shared history between settlers and Aboriginal people. Healing the relationship across diverse communities will require education, awareness, and increased understanding of the legacy and the impacts of the IRS. The TRC mandate also includes the education of all Canadians about the IRS system.

- **Read and act** on the Calls to Action issued by the TRC:  
[http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls\\_to\\_Action\\_English2.pdf](http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf)

These Calls to Action have specific implications for peoples across broad sectors including students and educators, health care professionals, people of faith, community activists and beyond. Look for the diverse recommendations that touch you and your community. CFSC is working specifically on #43, 44, 45, 47, and 48, for example. Share with others who could act individually or corporately. Read the full reports of the Commission, including stories of survivors, for the bigger picture: <http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=890>

- **Contact your MP and urge them to use the [\*UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples\*](#)** as the roadmap for reconciliation. The *Declaration* is the first Principle of Reconciliation as identified by the TRC. Ask CFSC how you and your local Meeting can engage with the *Declaration* by contacting us.
- **Educate yourself** about the Residential School System and the impacts on communities. Invite CFSC to join in your education efforts. A good place to start is by looking at the TRC website and educational materials, available online at [www.trc.ca](http://www.trc.ca) or explore the resources and archives of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation at <http://umanitoba.ca/centres/nctr/>
- **Join with Indigenous Peoples in common issues** around fishing, logging, land appropriation, health, etc, by going to demonstrations, protests, and meetings organized by Indigenous organizations. Look for **local cultural events** such as theatre, music, Powwows and sporting events. Look for Aboriginal news sources to educate yourself, such as APTN.

## Background information on the Doctrine of Discovery

### What is the Doctrine of Discovery and *terra nullius*?

The Doctrine of Discovery was used as legal and moral justification for colonial dispossession of sovereign Indigenous Nations. Christian explorers claimed lands for their monarchs who could exploit the land, regardless of the original occupiers. This was invalidly based on the presumed racial superiority of European Christian peoples and was used to dehumanize, exploit and subjugate Indigenous Peoples and dispossess them of their most basic rights. Such ideology leads to practices that continue through modern day laws and policies. *Terra nullius* asserts that no one owned the land prior to European assertion of sovereignty.

### How has the Doctrine of Discovery been used in Canada?

Leading cases in Canada, such as *St. Catherines Milling and Lumber Company v. The Queen*, have relied upon early U.S. Supreme Court cases such as *Johnson v. McIntosh* that are based on the Doctrine of Discovery. Yet, in these and other significant legal cases, the Indigenous Peoples affected were not included as direct parties. Such breaches of natural justice serve to further discredit these rulings and the doctrine on which they are based.

Discovery was used as a tool to attempt the “exclusive power to extinguish” Indigenous rights on an ongoing basis.<sup>1</sup> The pre-existing inherent sovereignty of Indigenous Peoples was not justly considered. Modern rulings, such as the BC Court of Appeal in 2012, have aided States by validating such destructive acts and by attempting to extinguish Indigenous rights through judicial rulings.<sup>2</sup>

### How does the Tsilhqot’in Supreme Court victory change the legal use of DoD in Canada?

In referring to the “pre-existing” land rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Supreme Court ruled in *Tsilhqot’in Nation*: “The doctrine of *terra nullius* (that no one owned the land prior to European assertion of sovereignty) never applied in Canada, as confirmed by the *Royal Proclamation (1763)*”.<sup>3</sup> This is because there are equitable principles<sup>4</sup> in the *Royal Proclamation* that have applied throughout Canada since its creation and such principles preclude any unjust, discriminatory doctrines.<sup>5</sup> Just as the Supreme Court concluded that the *Proclamation* confirms that the doctrine of *terra nullius* never applied in Canada, the same must be true in regard to the doctrine of discovery.<sup>6</sup> Both these doctrines are also inconsistent with the constitutional principle to uphold the honour of the Crown.

<sup>1</sup> *Johnson v. McIntosh*, 21 U.S. (8 Wheat.) 543 (1823).

<sup>2</sup> *Tsilhqot’in Nation v. British Columbia*, 2012 B.C.C.A. 285 (broad territorial claims to title are “antithetical to the goal of reconciliation”). CFSC intervened in this case at the appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada.

<sup>3</sup> *Tsilhqot’in Nation v. British Columbia*, 2014 SCC 44, para. 69.

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., *Rupert’s Land and North-Western Territory Order* (U.K.), 23 June 1870, reprinted in R.S.C. 1985, App. II, No. 9, Schedule A - Joint Address of the Senate and the House of Commons of Canada, December 1867: “... upon the transference of the territories in question to the Canadian Government, the claims of the Indian tribes to compensation for lands required for purposes of settlement will be considered and settled in conformity with the equitable principles which have uniformly governed the British Crown in its dealings with the aborigines.” [emphasis added]

<sup>5</sup> See also *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia*, [1997] 3 S.C.R. 1010, para. 200 (reasons of La Forest and L’Heureux-Dubé JJ. were delivered by La Forest): “In essence, the rights set out in the Proclamation ... were applied in principle to aboriginal peoples across the country”. [emphasis added]

<sup>6</sup> Robert J. Miller, “The International Law of Colonialism: A Comparative Analysis”, (2011) 15 *Lewis & Clark L. Rev.* 847 at 849.



### **What are other faith organizations saying about the Doctrine of Discovery?**

Many faith-based groups, including the World Council of Churches, are examining discovery and repudiating the doctrine. The TRC has called on all faith bodies to repudiate the concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous lands and peoples, such as the Doctrine of Discovery and *terra nullius*, and the reformation of policies within their institutions that continue to rely on such concepts. CFSC will be participating in an ecumenical meeting discussing this in November.

### **What does the CYM Minute on the DoD say, and what does it mean for Friends' witness?**

The Doctrine of Discovery found in Papal Bulls was never supported by the Religious Society of Friends. However, as a doctrine with roots in a religious context and that has had ongoing legal/societal ramifications, it has been publically commented on and criticized by many faith bodies. The CYM Minute on DoD was achieved after a careful process of discernment through which Friends across Canada engaged and seasoned a draft statement brought forward at CYM and which expressed Friends' testimonies of equality and peace, recognizing that of God in everyone. As part of our Witness, CFSC organized an educational panel at the closing ceremonies of the TRC on DoD.

The Minute concludes: Friends are encouraged to explore further how we personally and corporately respond to how "discovery" is ingrained in our culture and way of life. Canadian Yearly Meeting supports the process of building right relationship among peoples in Canada and we ask ourselves what the process of bringing reconciliation and healing means to us and to how we proceed.

### **What impact would Canada formally renouncing the DoD have on reconciliation?**

While it does not change past injustices, it would acknowledge our collective moral responsibility and recognize the obligations Canada has in the present to Indigenous Peoples. It would be more than a merely symbolic gesture as it would show good faith and lay to rest an offensive legal justification based on racial superiority for the subjugation of Indigenous Peoples.

### **What are likely legal effects if the Government of Canada formally renounced the DoD?**

While the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) did explicitly reject the doctrine of *terra nullius*, the SCC did not refer to the DoD in the *Tsilhqot'in Nation* decision. The DoD continues to be the unacknowledged "elephant in the room". If Canada formally repudiated the DoD it would not change the historic title to possession of lands held by settlers or mean that Canada automatically accepts Aboriginal title for all unceded territory of Indigenous Peoples. The necessity to resolve land rights claims will remain and these would still have to be negotiated or litigated. However, repudiating the DoD and interpreting Canadian law in a manner consistent with the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and other contemporary international human rights standards will allow a fair and equitable settlement of outstanding issues of Indigenous lands, territories and resources. Rather than taking an adversarial position against Indigenous Peoples, Canada should uphold the honour of the Crown and engage in a resolution of land rights that does not try to minimize what Indigenous Peoples are entitled to. Indigenous Peoples should not have to engage in protracted, expensive litigation to have recognition of their lands and rights respected.

### **Can we envision a new paradigm to replace the DoD?**

A paradigm that is truthful about the history of past relations between Indigenous Peoples and settlers but allows for resolution of outstanding issues of land claims and self-determination is essential for advancing the reconciliation process between Indigenous Peoples and non-Aboriginal Canadians. Let us recognize that Indigenous Peoples in sovereign nations occupied the land before contact and we have an erratic history of making treaties and in honouring what treaties were made. Indigenous Peoples do not expect settlers to surrender occupation of lands they live on and return to their ancestral countries of origin. We are all here and must live together. Canada presently engages in an adversarial relationship with Indigenous Peoples. This is contradictory to reconciliation. If Indigenous Peoples are able to realize their full potential, individually and collectively, all of Canada benefits.

Examples abound of amicable relationships based on mutual cooperation established after the early contact between Indigenous Peoples and settlers. Early European settlement of the Americas would not have been possible without Indigenous Peoples sharing their traditional knowledge of the land, its flora and fauna with settlers. The first European settlers were often ill prepared for the challenges of living in the new land. Those who survived and endured were helped by Indigenous Peoples, who shared with the new arrivals.

The Royal Proclamation of 1763 was issued by George III after the defeat of the French in Québec with the crucial support of First Nations allies. A year later, at Fort Niagara, a gathering of representatives from a couple of dozen First Nations from Nova Scotia to the Great Plains and as far north as Hudson Bay met with Sir William Johnson, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, representing the Crown. At this gathering the Covenant Chain of Friendship, a multination relationship in which no member gave up their sovereignty, embodied in a two-row wampum belt communicating the promises made, was affirmed. The Proclamation forms a basis for the land rights claims of Indigenous Peoples in Canada – First Nations, Inuit, and Métis and is therefore mentioned in section 25 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Many leading Aboriginal law scholars assert the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and the Treaty of Niagara together form a treaty between First Nations and the Crown that guaranteed Indigenous self-government.<sup>7</sup>

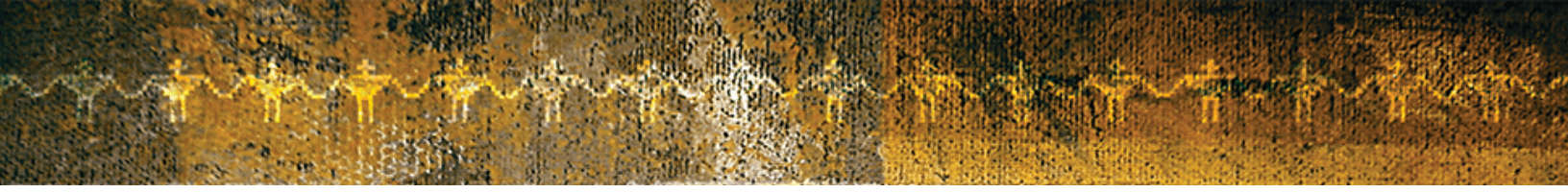
The TRC has called for Canada to jointly develop with Indigenous Peoples a Royal Proclamation of Reconciliation to be issued by the Crown. The proclamation would build on the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and the Treaty of Niagara of 1764, and reaffirm the Nation-to-Nation relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the Crown. The proclamation would include a commitment to repudiate concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous lands and peoples such as the Doctrine of Discovery and terra nullius.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Borrows, John. "Wampum at Niagara: The Royal Proclamation, Canadian Legal History, and Self-Government," in *Aboriginal and Treaty Rights in Canada*, ed. Michael Asch. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997.

<sup>8</sup> Recommendation 45





## Queries for Friends as we engage with Reconciliation

- Am I basing my work towards reconciliation on the [10 Principles of Reconciliation](#) identified by the TRC?
- Am I aware of the local history of colonization?
- Am I aware of current local reconciliation efforts, including those by other faith communities?
- How do I find out how to approach and engage with Indigenous people where I live?
- What queries should guide me throughout my reconciliation efforts?
- Are my actions in support of Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty? Am I "in solidarity" only because I already agree on this issue?
- Am I, to the best of my knowledge and ability, avoiding the use of hurtful language, stereotypes or non-Indigenous ways of framing issues, either consciously or unconsciously, between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples generally and in the historical context of my region?
- Am I doing "my own work" with humility and grace? Am I aware of my own areas of ignorance and discomfort? Am I drawing deeply on the emotional resources of Indigenous people in my life, or am I just asking non-Indigenous F/friends to accompany me in my own journey?
- Are we as Friends pro-active in our self-education efforts (instead of waiting on or expecting others to educate us, especially Indigenous people, groups, organizations)
- Does my Meeting or Worship Group acknowledge the territory on which we meet? Are we holding our piece of reconciliation efforts mindfully, so that any acknowledgement is not tokenistic?
- If I find out where my local Friendship Centre is, can I just walk in some day to find out more? How can I respectfully engage?
- Are there news sources, listservs, or other media to help me understand current events from the perspective of local and national Indigenous groups and communities?
- Are we actively challenging racism, stereotyping, and colonialism when we encounter it (e.g. in the media or workplace, with our f/Friends and families, etc).

## Reflections of Canadian Friends: What does reconciliation mean to me?

*To me, reconciliation is about accepting and fulfilling my responsibility to understand and heal, while recognizing that it is not my own needs or feelings that are central to the process. Reconciliation is an ongoing journey of learning, building relationships, and accepting that you will make mistakes. It's unpicking colonial attitudes inside your own heart and mind, and using your political voice to advocate and bear witness, following the lead of Indigenous Peoples. It's learning when your actions are helpful and when they are interference. It's being willing to ask big questions about the future of this land we call Canada and not feeling that Settlers should get the final say. (Maggie Knight)*

*Reconciliation is sincere recognition of equal rights, and acting from this attitude. (Richard Preston)*

*I think reconciliation is expressed, for the dominant culture/society, in the clear forward movement towards recognizing that it has viewed first peoples and acted on a view of first peoples as being inferior and less human, and arriving at a place which is deeply cognizant of that reality and its very severe implications for first peoples, and which also accepts what flows from this recognition, namely, the necessity of taking not only symbolic but concrete actions to address those relational and structural realities. Reconciliation thus implies discernible changes in law and policy that are far-reaching and systemic in nature. (Heather Neun)*

*Reconciliation means not only a respectful relationship, but also doing the work together to make it true that Indigenous Peoples can fully exercise and enjoy their rights. (Rachel Singleton-Polster)*

*I approach reconciliation with a sense of thanks that we are all now guided by the compass and documentation of the TRC and the UN Declaration. (Don Alexander)*

*For me personally reconciliation means learning how to be in right relation with the land I'm living on and with the Indigenous Peoples of this land, learning what right relation actually means. It means doing my inner work of unlearning colonial, exploitative, discriminatory beliefs and behaviours; educating myself on the histories and experiences of Indigenous Peoples, including the impact of colonialism; participating in local reconciliation efforts; and learning how to relate to the Earth and all beings as sacred and changing my life accordingly. At a broader level, I'm thinking of reconciliation as full state and societal support for and participation in redressing the impacts of colonialism on Indigenous communities at all levels (education, health, housing, employment, language, culture, child welfare, etc). I'm envisioning a society in which Indigenous culture, knowledge, and participation are valued, vital, welcomed, where space is made in people's hearts and minds and we learn how to create community together. I feel that reconciliation means healing, for settlers, for the land, for the Indigenous Peoples. Ultimately it is the Indigenous people who can say whether reconciliation is manifesting, so we (settlers) need to follow their lead without putting undue burden on them or expecting them to do our work for us. (Manuela Popovici)*

## Selected Calls to Action

*There are 94 Calls to Action, and Friends are encouraged to carefully examine each Call, and to recognize that meaningful reconciliation requires action in all sectors and across society, as the 94 Calls are interrelated in their impacts. CFSC has been actively working on specific areas in the Calls highlighted below, and we encourage Friends and Meetings to thoroughly read all the Calls to find where they can take practical steps towards implementation.*

### **Canadian Government and the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples***

43. We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to **fully adopt and implement** the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* as the framework for reconciliation.

44. We call upon the Government of Canada to **develop a national action plan, strategies, and other concrete measures** to achieve the goals of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

### **Royal Proclamation and Covenant of Reconciliation**

45. We call upon the Government of Canada, on behalf of all Canadians, to jointly develop with Aboriginal peoples a Royal Proclamation of Reconciliation to be issued by the Crown. The proclamation would build on the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and the Treaty of Niagara of 1764, and **reaffirm the nation-to-nation relationship** between Aboriginal peoples and the Crown. The proclamation would include, but not be limited to, the following commitments:

- i. **Repudiate concepts used to justify European sovereignty** over Indigenous lands and peoples such as the Doctrine of Discovery and *terra nullius*.
- ii. **Adopt and implement** the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* as the framework for reconciliation.
- iii. **Renew or establish Treaty relationships** based on principles of mutual recognition, mutual respect, and shared responsibility for maintaining those relationships into the future.
- iv. Reconcile Aboriginal and Crown constitutional and legal orders to **ensure that Aboriginal peoples are full partners in Confederation**, including the recognition and integration of Indigenous laws and legal traditions in negotiation and implementation processes involving Treaties, land claims, and other constructive agreements.

### **Settlement Agreement Parties and the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples***

48. We call upon the church parties to the Settlement Agreement, **and all other faith groups and interfaith social justice groups** in Canada who have not already done so, **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. This would include, but not be limited to, the following commitments:

i. Ensuring that their **institutions, policies, programs, and practices comply** with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

ii. **Respecting Indigenous peoples' right to self-determination in spiritual matters**, including the right to practise, develop, and teach their own spiritual and religious traditions, customs, and ceremonies, consistent with Article 12:1 of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

iii. Engaging in **ongoing public dialogue and actions** to support the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

iv. **Issuing a statement no later than March 31, 2016**, from all religious denominations and faith groups, as to how they will implement the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

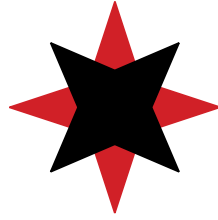
### **Church Apologies and Reconciliation**

60. We call upon leaders of the church parties to the Settlement Agreement and **all other faiths, in collaboration** with Indigenous spiritual leaders, Survivors, schools of theology, seminaries, and other religious training centres, to develop and teach curriculum for all student clergy, and all clergy and staff who work in Aboriginal communities, on the need to **respect Indigenous spirituality in its own right**, the history and legacy of residential schools and the roles of the church parties in that system, the history and legacy of religious conflict in Aboriginal families and communities, and the responsibility that churches have to mitigate such conflicts and **prevent spiritual violence**.



*Friends Walking for Reconciliation, May 31, 2015:  
Ellen Gabriel, Jennifer Preston, & Rachel Singleton-Polster*

**Read the complete calls to action at [www.trc.ca](http://www.trc.ca)**



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### Canadian Friends Service Committee welcomes the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

“We have described for you a mountain, we have shown you the path to the top. We call upon you to do the climbing.” These were the passionate words of Commissioner Justice Murray Sinclair at the issuing of the final report of the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada](#) (TRC).

[Canadian Friends Service Committee](#) (Quakers) welcomes the [94 Calls to Action](#) of the TRC and congratulates the Commissioners on their dedicated work. We recognize the solemnity of this occasion and pay our deepest respects to all those affected by the residential school experience.

“The children were meant to be the instrument of our own peoples' demise,” stated Grand Chief Edward John at a panel on the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* during the TRC, “but it didn't work out like that.” The [TRC report](#) is an in-depth documentation of the suffering of the gross and systematic human rights violations that took place in Indian Residential Schools. CFSC urges all Canadians to read and share the findings of the report, and to support it as a crucial step in the journey towards reconciliation.

Canadian Friends Service Committee was honoured to take part in the TRC's closing events including the Walk for Reconciliation and the handing over of the TRC report on June 2nd. We participated in panels on the dismantling of the doctrine of discovery and on the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

We recognize that the settler populations of Canada have all benefited from occupation and usurpation of Indigenous lands, territories, and resources. The root causes of ongoing impoverishment and oppression of Indigenous Peoples must be identified and addressed. As Commissioner Chief Wilton Littlechild noted, reconciliation is a Canadian story that asks all to “open your mind and be willing to learn, and to link arms with Indigenous Peoples as we work together to heal and secure a better future.”

[United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon praised the work of the TRC](#) and encouraged “all involved in this effort [reconciliation] to follow up on the report’s recommendations, using the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* as a road map.”<sup>1</sup>

The *UN Declaration* constitutes a principled framework for justice, reconciliation, healing and peace. Former UN Special Rapporteur James Anaya has underlined that “implementation of the Declaration should be regarded as political, moral and, yes, legal imperative without qualification.”<sup>2</sup>

The TRC aimed to, “Guide and inspire Aboriginal peoples and Canadians in a process of truth and healing on a path leading toward reconciliation and renewed relationships based on mutual understanding and respect.” In the report issued, the Commission noted “that a refusal to respect the rights and remedies in the *Declaration* will serve to further aggravate the legacy of residential schools, and will constitute a barrier to progress towards reconciliation.”

Truth telling is a necessary step for reconciliation, and there is much work yet to be done. As an integral part of this work, we are committed to the full and effective implementation of the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

We call on the government of Canada to closely collaborate with Indigenous Peoples in the full and effective implementation of the [TRC’s Calls to Action](#).

On this occasion of the formal closing of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, CFSC acknowledges the dedicated strength and courage of all those involved and we commit to the journey ahead of us. As we step forward together to “climb the mountain” towards reconciliation we are inspired by the words of Commissioner Chief Wilton Littlechild who described the seven most important words in this work: “I’m sorry, I love you, thank you.”

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sgsm16812.doc.htm>

<sup>2</sup><http://www.un.org/press/en/2010/gashc3982.doc.htm>



## **Federal government should follow lead of Truth and Reconciliation Commission in recognizing the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* as framework for reconciliation**

June 9, 2015- Indigenous peoples' organizations and human rights groups are calling on federal, provincial, and territorial governments to follow the lead of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in calling for the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* to be used as a valuable framework for the reconciliation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Thousands of people attended powerful events in Ottawa last week, as the TRC formally concluded its mandate. In an executive summary of its final report, due out later this year, the Commission emphasized that “Canadians must do more than just talk about reconciliation; we must learn how to practise reconciliation in our everyday lives—within ourselves and our families, and in our communities, governments, places of worship, schools, and workplaces.” The Commission is adamant that the *UN Declaration* “provides the necessary principles, norms, and standards for reconciliation to flourish in twenty-first-century Canada.”

The Coalition for the Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples presented an educational workshop on the *Declaration* during the final TRC plenary sessions. TRC Commissioner Chief Wilton Littlechild shared with the filled-to-capacity room a message from UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. The Secretary General congratulated the TRC on its work and encouraged “all involved in this effort [reconciliation] to follow up on the report’s recommendations, using the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a road map.”<sup>1</sup>

Since its adoption by the UN General Assembly in 2007, the *Declaration* has been relied on by courts, human rights commissions, Indigenous governments, as well as corporations and various sectors of civil society.

Despite endorsing the *UN Declaration*, the federal government has continued to refuse to work with Indigenous peoples and civil society on implementation. Government MPs recently voted down a private members bill that would have required a regular review of legislation to ensure compliance with the *Declaration*. Canada is yet to have any substantive response to the report of the TRC.

In its executive summary released on June 2, the TRC stated, “The Commission is convinced that a refusal to respect the rights and remedies in the Declaration will serve to further aggravate the legacy of residential schools, and will constitute a barrier to progress towards reconciliation.”

*The Coalition for the Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples consists of Indigenous Peoples organizations and human rights groups. The Coalition has worked collaboratively on the development, successful adoption, and implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples for the past 15 years.*

### **Joint Statement of the Coalition for the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

Amnesty International Canada; Assembly of First Nations; Canadian Friends Service Committee (Quakers); Chiefs of Ontario; First Nations Summit; Grand Council of the Crees (Eyou Istchee); Indigenous World Association; Inuit Circumpolar Council; Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami; KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives; Native Women’s Association of Canada; Québec Native Women/Femmes Autochtones du Québec; Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs

<sup>1</sup><http://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sgsm16812.doc.htm>

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**THE SECRETARY GENERAL**

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**MESSAGE ON THE RELEASE OF THE FINAL REPORT  
OF THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF CANADA  
Ottawa, 1 June 2015**

I congratulate the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the peoples of Canada and the Government on the release of the final report to inform all about what happened in the “Indian Residential Schools” over the course of 126 years. I join Canada in honouring the memory of all whose human rights were violated in these schools through forced assimilation.

The support of the United Nations for the work of the Truth Commission is rooted in a conviction that historical injustices contribute to a legacy of continuing disadvantages and ongoing violations of indigenous peoples’ rights. Recording and sharing the truth, enables those affected to come to terms with their suffering, loss and grief. Informing society about how the rights of individuals and peoples have been violated is vital to preventing the recurrence of such tragedies.

I would like to recognize the courage of the survivors who carried their childhood wounds into their adult lives, and have lived to tell the truth. I also admire those who have agreed to accept the findings of this report.

Truth-telling is important but not sufficient for reconciliation. I encourage all involved in this effort to follow up on the report’s recommendations, using the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a roadmap.

The United Nations stands with all peoples of Canada in remembering your losses and suffering, and calls upon other states with similar residential school practices to examine historic wrongs and legacies of injustice.