



The Catholic Women's League of Canada Position Paper

TITLE: Truth and Reconciliation

POSITION STATEMENT

The Catholic Women's League of Canada commits to "walking together" with Indigenous peoples of Canada, begun by Pope Francis, and providing members with resources and opportunities to advance the cause of truth and reconciliation.

- In accordance with church teachings, the League commits to promoting awareness and understanding of Indigenous peoples' histories, spiritualities, cultures, languages, traditions, rights and concerns and to becoming more informed about the violation of their dignity and human rights by governments, churches, society and individuals.
- The League recognizes that reconciliation is a process of healing relationships, requiring changed hearts and attitudes through encounter and dialogue, education, truth sharing, apology and commemoration, and acknowledgement and redress of past harms. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* instructs that freedom makes people responsible for their actions.

BACKGROUND

In March 2023, Pope Francis urged, "Never again can the Christian community allow itself to be infected by the idea that one culture is superior to others, or that it is legitimate to employ ways of coercing others... In no uncertain terms, the Church's magisterium upholds the respect due to every human being. The Catholic Church therefore repudiates those concepts that fail to recognize the inherent human rights of [Indigenous] peoples, including what has become known as the legal and political 'doctrine of discovery'" (Joint). In a meeting at the Vatican in April 2022 with Indigenous representatives from Canada, Pope Francis stated, "Any truly effective process of healing requires concrete actions. ...Dialogue is the key to knowledge and sharing..." Pope Francis affirmed the commitment of Canadian bishops, stating "...to continue advancing together with [Indigenous peoples] on a renewed, constructive, fruitful path, where encounters and shared projects will be of great help" (Francis).

During his penitential pilgrimage to Canada in July 2022, historic encounters took place between Pope Francis and First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples, beginning the Catholic church's journey of "Walking Together" on the path of reconciliation. The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCC) has published a booklet, *Walking Together Toward Truth, Healing, Reconciliation, and Hope*, which contains speeches and homilies by Pope Francis during his pilgrimage. The CCCC has issued a series of pastoral letters, "That We May Walk Together," addressing First Nations, Inuit, Métis and the people of God in Canada. They are "intended as a framework for local engagement with Indigenous peoples."

Canada adopted the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* in June 2021, setting out its obligations to uphold the human rights, including treaty and inherent rights, of Indigenous peoples. The declaration provides a framework for "reconciliation, healing and peace, as well as harmonious and cooperative relations based on the principles of justice, democracy, respect for human rights, non-discrimination and good faith" (Canada, Department of Justice).

SUPPORTIVE ACTIONS

- Be knowledgeable and supportive of the CCCB pastoral letters “That We May Walk Together” and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s 94 Calls to Action.
- Engage in allyship with Indigenous Peoples. Foster a healing path to reconciliation through prayer and good works.
- Express solidarity through land acknowledgment. Participate in activities/events such as the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls/Red Dress Day (May 5th), National Indigenous Peoples Day (June 21st), National Day for Truth and Reconciliation/Orange Shirt Day (September 30th).
- Monitor federal and provincial legislation in response to Truth and Reconciliation.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Canada, Department of Justice. “Backgrounder: United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act.” *Canada.ca*, 10 Dec. 2021, www.justice.gc.ca/eng/declaration/about-apropos.html.

Canada, House of Commons. “Bill C-15 (43-2) United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act.” *Parliament of Canada*, 21 June, 2021, www.parl.ca/DocumentViewer/en/43-2/bill/C-15/royal-assent.

Francis. “Meeting with Representatives of Indigenous Peoples in Canada.” *The Holy See*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1 Apr. 2022, www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2022/april/documents/20220401-popoli-indigeni-canada.html.

“Joint Statement of the Dicasteries for Culture and Education and for Promoting Integral Human Development on the ‘Doctrine of Discovery’.” *Holy See Press Office*, 30 Mar. 2023, press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2023/03/30/230330b.html.

“That We May Walk Together” Series of Pastoral Letters (2023).” *Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops*, 8 Feb. 2023, www.cccb.ca/indigenous-peoples/that-we-may-walk-together-series-of-pastoral-letters-2023/.

Vatican. “Catechism of the Catholic Church.” *The Holy See*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 4 Nov. 2003, www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM#fonte.

Walking Together Toward Truth, Healing, Reconciliation, and Hope, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2022.

STATUS

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