

**CHARTING A PATH FORWARD:
THE VISIT OF POPE FRANCIS
AND STEPS TOWARDS AN
ACTION PLAN IN SOLIDARITY
WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

Presentation by
Archbishop Donald Bolen

APOLOGY AS A FIRST STEP NOT AN END POINT

- ▶ Maskwacis: “Dear brothers and sisters, many of you and your representatives have stated that begging pardon is not the end of the matter. I fully agree: that is only the first step, the starting point. I also recognize that, ‘looking to the past, no effort to beg pardon and to seek to repair the harm done will ever be sufficient’ and that, ‘looking ahead to the future, no effort must be spared to create a culture able to prevent such situations from happening.’”

LOCAL ENGAGEMENT

- ▶ “Dear brothers and sisters: gestures and visits can be important, but most words and deeds of reconciliation take place at the local level, in communities like this, where individuals and families travel side-by-side, day by day. To pray together, to help one another, to share life stories, common joys and common struggles: this is what opens the door to the reconciling work of God.”

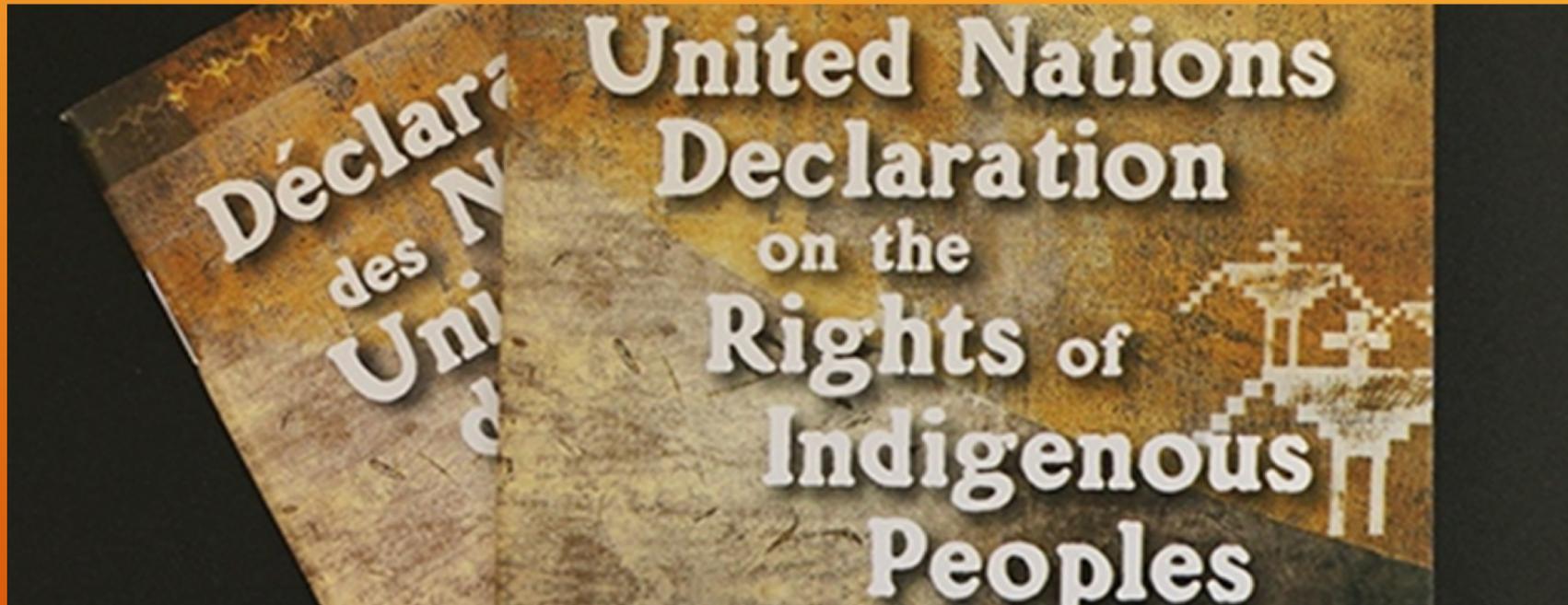
- ▶ Lac Ste. Anne: "Let us ask ourselves: what do I do for those who need me? When looking at the indigenous peoples and thinking of their history and the pain that they endured, what do I do for indigenous peoples? Do I merely listen with curiosity, horrified by what happened in the past, or do I do something concrete for them? Do I pray, meet, read, support them, and let myself be touched by their stories? Looking at my own life, if I find myself suffering, do I listen to Jesus who wants to take me beyond the confines of my impatience, who invites me to start over again, to go a step further, to love?"

TRUTH-TELLING, TELLING HISTORY IN A NEW WAY

- ▶ Meeting with Indigenous delegations, Rome, April 1, 2022:
“...without historical memory and without a commitment to learning from past mistakes, problems remain unresolved and keep coming back. We can see this these days in the case of war. The memory of the past must never be sacrificed at the altar of alleged progress.
- ▶ In a fraternal spirit, I encourage the Bishops and the Catholic community to continue taking steps towards the transparent search for truth and to foster healing and reconciliation.”

- ▶ “Meeting with Indigenous Delegation, Québec City: I have come as a pilgrim, despite my physical limitations, to take further steps forward with you and for you. I do this so that progress may be made in the search for truth, so that the processes of healing and reconciliation may continue, and so that seeds of hope can keep being sown for future generations – indigenous and non-indigenous alike – who desire to live together, in harmony, as brothers and sisters.”

SUPPORTING THE INHERENT RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES



- ▶ Citadelle de Québec: “Even in a country as developed and prosperous as Canada, which pays great attention to social assistance, there are many homeless persons who turn to churches and food banks to receive essential help in meeting their needs, which, lest we forget, are not only material.... It is scandalous that the well-being generated by economic development does not benefit all the sectors of society. And it is indeed sad that precisely among the native peoples we often find many indices of poverty, along with other negative indicators, such as the low percentage of schooling, and less than easy access to owning a home and to health care.”

- ▶ (continued): “it is necessary, in admitting our faults, to work together to accomplish a goal that I know all of you share: to promote the legitimate rights of the native populations and to favour processes of healing and reconciliation between them and the non-indigenous people of the country. That is reflected in the commitment to respond in a fitting way to the appeals of the Commission for Truth and Reconciliation, as well as in the concern to acknowledge the rights of the native peoples.”

- ▶ (continued:) “The Holy See and the local Catholic communities are concretely committed to promoting the indigenous cultures through specific and appropriate forms of spiritual accompaniment that include attention to their cultural traditions, customs, languages and educational processes, in the spirit of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.”

- ▶ UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- ▶ -Catholic endorsement of the text
- ▶ -Rights to self-determination; to not be assimilated; to their spiritual and religious traditions and ceremonies; to transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures; to their own education systems; to the recognition, observance and enforcement of treaties; rights pertaining to the land.

- ▶ Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action addressed to Churches:
 - ▶ -UN Declaration
 - ▶ -Doctrine of Discovery
 - ▶ -Call to Action 61: support of language and culture; healing and reconciliation; dialogue between elders and youth;
 - ▶ -education and formation;
 - ▶ -papal apology;
 - ▶ -respect for Indigenous spirituality;
 - ▶ -cemeteries;
 - ▶ -monument;
 - ▶ -funding;
 - ▶ -covenant of reconciliation;
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SUPPORTING INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

- ▶ Maskwacis: “When the European colonists first arrived here, there was a great opportunity to bring about a fruitful encounter between cultures, traditions and forms of spirituality. Yet for the most part that did not happen.
- ▶ It is painful to think of how the firm soil of values, language and culture that made up the authentic identity of your peoples was eroded, and that you have continued to pay the price of this.”

- ▶ Lac Ste. Anne: “The waters give life. I think of the many dear grandmothers who are here with us: your hearts are springs from which the living water of faith flowed, and with it you quenched the thirst of your children and grandchildren. I am struck by the vital role of women in indigenous communities: they occupy a prominent place as blessed sources not only of physical but also of spiritual life. ...part of the painful legacy we are now confronting stems from the fact that indigenous grandmothers were prevented from passing on the faith in their own language and culture.”

- ▶ Citadelle de Québec: “The indigenous peoples have much to teach us about care and protection for the family; among them, from an early age, children learn to recognize right from wrong, to be truthful, to share, to correct mistakes, to begin anew, to comfort one another and to be reconciled.
- ▶ Meeting with delegation in Québec City: “In a world that, tragically, is often all too individualistic, how precious is your profoundly genuine sense of family and community. How important it is to cultivate properly the bond between young and old, and to maintain a healthy and harmonious relationship with all of creation!”

Message of support from
Our Lady of Guadalupe Circle
on the occasion of the
*United Nations 2019 Year of Indigenous
Languages*



Christi Belcourt, Métis, born 1966. *The Wisdom of the Universe* (detail), 2014. Acrylic on canvas. Unframed: 171 × 282 cm. Art Gallery of Ontario. Purchased with funds donated by Greg Latremaille, 2014. 2014/6 © Christi Bel

THE BLESSING OF INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS AND UNDERSTANDING OF CREATION

- ▶ In his encyclical on the environment, *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis noted that in caring for creation,
- ▶ it is essential to show special care for indigenous communities and their cultural traditions. They are not merely one minority among others, but should be the principal dialogue partners, especially when large projects affecting their land are proposed. For them, land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values. When they remain on their land, they themselves care for it best (no. 146).

- ▶ Maskwacis: “Brothers and sisters, you have lived on these lands for thousands of years, following ways of life that respect the earth which you received as a legacy from past generations and are keeping for those yet to come. You have treated it as a gift of the Creator to be shared with others and to be cherished in harmony with all that exists, in profound fellowship with all living beings. In this way, you learned to foster a sense of family and community, and to build solid bonds between generations, honouring your elders and caring for your little ones. A treasury of sound customs and teachings, centred on concern for others, truthfulness, courage and respect, humility, honesty and practical wisdom!”

- ▶ At the Citadelle de Québec he spoke of the constant concern of Indigenous Peoples “to protect the land and the environment, in fidelity to a harmonious vision of creation as an open book that teaches human beings to love the Creator and to live in symbiosis with other living creatures. We can learn much from this ability to listen attentively to God, to persons and to nature. And we need it, especially amid the dizzying and frenzied pace of today’s world... We need to be able to look, as the indigenous wisdom tradition teaches, seven generations ahead, and not to our immediate convenience, to the next elections, or the support of this or that lobby.... The values and teachings of the indigenous peoples are precious.”

- ▶ Iqaluit: “I am grateful for this opportunity to be here in Nunavut.... I tried to imagine, after our meeting in Rome, these vast places that you have inhabited from time immemorial and that others would consider inhospitable. You have come to love these places, to respect, cherish and enhance them, passing on, from generation to generation, such basic values as respect for the elderly, genuine fraternity and care for the environment. There is a beautiful and harmonious relationship between you and this land you inhabit, because it too is strong and resilient, and responds with brilliant light to the darkness that enshrouds it for most of the year.”

- ▶ Questions for table discussion:
- ▶ -which of these elements of an action plan resonate most for you?
- ▶ What can you do to be a part of these elements of action plan in your parish, school or community?
- ▶ What other elements do you think will be important as we learn to walk in a good way with Indigenous Peoples?
- ▶ What are the challenges going forward, and how can we address them?



WALKING TOGETHER

POPE FRANCIS CANADA 2022

- ▶ Meeting with Indigenous delegations in Rome, April 1, 2022: “I wish to tell you that the Church stands beside you and wants to continue journeying with you. Dialogue is the key to knowledge and sharing, and the Bishops of Canada have clearly stated their commitment to continue advancing together with you on a renewed, constructive, fruitful path, where encounters and shared projects will be of great help.”

- ▶ Maskacis: I trust and pray that Christians and civil society in this land may grow in the ability to accept and respect the identity and the experience of the indigenous peoples. It is my hope that concrete ways can be found to make those peoples better known and esteemed, so that all may learn to walk together. For my part, I will continue to encourage the efforts of all Catholics to support the indigenous peoples. ... We are speaking of processes that must penetrate hearts. My presence here and the commitment of the Canadian Bishops are a testimony to our will to persevere on this path.

- ▶ “Meeting with delegation, Québec: ...The vastness of this land makes us think of the lengthy path of healing and reconciliation that we are facing together. Indeed, the phrase that has accompanied us since March, when the indigenous delegates came to visit me in Rome, and inspires my visit here among you, is Walking Together/Marcher Ensemble.”

- ▶ Words written by Pope Francis in the visitors book at the Basilica in Québec City:
 - ▶ « Marcher ensemble, ce n'est pas facile, mais c'est possible. »
 - ▶ « It is not easy to walk together, but it is possible. »
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