



Press release
For immediate release

**International conference seeks to promote dialogue between Catholic Bishops
and Indigenous-Catholic populations**

25 September 2023, Ottawa – Representatives from Catholic Indigenous organizations came together last week with Catholic Bishops from the Episcopal Conferences of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States for the International Conference on Catholic Indigenous Ministry (ICCI). This gathering, held in Washington D.C., was a historic milestone advancing dialogue, learning, and fellowship among pastoral agents working with Indigenous-Catholic communities.

Hosted by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Subcommittee on Native American Affairs, the purpose of the week-long gathering was to share experiences, ideas, resources, and best practices encountered in the relationship between the Catholic Church and Indigenous communities.

The Canadian delegates who participated in this International Conference were: the Most Rev. Richard Smith, Archbishop of Edmonton, the Most Rev. Mark Hagemoen, Bishop of Saskatoon, who represented the CCCB, alongside Ms. Rosella Kinoshameg (Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory, Ojibway/Odawa), Ms. Giselle Marion (Tłıchǫ First Nation, Behchokǫ, NWT) and the Hon. Graydon Nicholas (Welastogiyik, Neqotkok), as Indigenous representatives.

“It was an honor to be here together along with the other representatives from the Native and Indigenous communities,” said Graydon Nicholas, a Wolastoquey Elder, former Lieutenant-Governor of New Brunswick, and member of [Our Lady of Guadalupe Circle](#). “I am grateful to have had the opportunity to share on the common themes that were identified, on matters of great interest, and on the hopes and challenges which we experience in our respective countries. We would like to thank the organizing committee for the years of careful preparation that have gone into making this Conference a reality.”

“This conference provided an opportunity for all participants to dialogue, which has fostered a better understanding of the relationship between the Church and Indigenous peoples,” said the Most Rev. Richard Smith, Archbishop of Edmonton. “My hope is that the conversations we had during this meeting can bring us closer together towards a path of dialogue and reconciliation. It was another opportunity to hear directly from the Indigenous peoples of Canada and other countries. This event was a reminder to walk together with our Indigenous peoples on the path to healing towards a future full of hope.”

The gathering added an international component to the wider and comprehensive synodal approach that the Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church is taking to reinvigorate ministry with various ethnic and cultural communities. Included as a key part of the meeting agenda was a listening session for the Bishops with representatives from Catholic Indigenous organizations, with the intent that it will help charter a path for ministry to Indigenous Peoples at the international level. The topics of discussion emphasized the importance of being both Catholic and Indigenous, and included evangelization, education, reconciliation, healing, inculturation, as well as reflection on social concerns such as poverty, racism, and the environment.

Maribel Mayorga

Director of Communications

Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB)

Email: communications@ccc.ca

Telephone: 613-241-9461, ext. 225