

service

Sue Lubowitz

"There is no single step that can eliminate the pain felt by residential school survivors, but by listening, seeking relationships, and working collaboratively where we are able, we hope to learn how to walk together in a new path of hope." Bishop William McGrattan

Almost twenty years after the adoption of the **Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**, progress has been made in formally recognizing Indigenous peoples, but they continue to face discrimination, marginalization and major challenges in enjoying their basic rights.

The Declaration, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly on September 13, 2007, established a universal framework of minimum survival standards for the dignity and well-being of the world's Indigenous peoples. It is the most comprehensive international instrument on Indigenous peoples' collective rights, including the rights to self-determination, traditional lands and culture.



Upholding the rights of Indigenous peoples is not merely a legal obligation but a moral responsibility deeply rooted in Catholic teachings and global human rights frameworks.

Catholic social teaching says that the life and dignity of Indigenous peoples should always be protected in the same way that the life and dignity of every human being should be protected.

Canada is home to a large and diverse Indigenous population. The Bishops in Canada share a profound commitment to renewing and strengthening relationships with Indigenous Peoples across Canada with whom the Catholic Church has maintained relations since the 17th century.

service

Sue Lubowitz

The Canadian Catholic Indigenous Council is the key element to this commitment. Consisting of Bishops and Indigenous Catholics, the Council furthers relationships, healing, and joint initiatives with Indigenous Peoples across Canada.



The Indigenous Reconciliation Fund was established to accept donations from 73 Catholic Dioceses across the country, and to advance healing and reconciliation initiatives, fulfilling the \$30 million financial commitment made by Canada's Bishops in September 2021. The fund seeks to support projects that are determined locally, in collaboration with First Nations, Métis and Inuit partners. The Indigenous Reconciliation Fund has raised \$20,116,915.52 to date. To view the 2024 report: <https://irfund.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/IRF-AR2024-English-HL.pdf>. Be sure to indicate that you are a CWL council or member when donating. The Ontario Provincial Council committed to a contribution of \$25,000 over five years ending in 2026.

For more about the Government of Canada's relationship with Indigenous Peoples go to <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/csj-sjc/principes-principes.html>

Councils are encouraged to observe National Indigenous Peoples Day (June 21), National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (Sept. 30), and The National Day of Prayer in Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples in Canada (Dec. 12). Councils may also wish to research the following days: National Ribbon Skirt Day (January 4), Have a Heart Day (February 14), National Indigenous Languages Day (March 31), National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls (May 5), Moose Hide Campaign Day (May 16), and Treaties Recognition Week (Ontario) during the first week of November.