



advocating for religion
in a pluralistic society and
in Canadian public life

**Statement on the Importance of Truth and Reconciliation
and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
March 28, 2016**

“Engaging issues involves both a speaking inward to one another and a speaking outward to society and the public.”

The Canadian Interfaith Conversation gathers faith community representatives who believe that people of faith can contribute positively to the benefit of all people in Canadian society. We advocate for religion in a pluralistic society and in Canadian public life, believing that conversation is essential to doing so effectively.

March 31st, 2016 is the deadline the Truth and Reconciliation Commission named for faith community public responses to the TRC: Calls to Action, # 48. We have prepared this statement in answer to that Call: “...to formally adopt and comply with the principles, norms and standards of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.”

The goal of bringing about a society where people of any or no faith can flourish together is a primary orienting concern of this interfaith conversation. Reconciliation with people of the First Nations has also been a core value of our Charter Vision since we first came together under that Vision in 2012.

Specifically, our vision states that “We want to promote harmony and spiritual insight among religions and religious communities in Canada, strengthen our society’s moral foundations, and work for greater realization of the fundamental freedom of conscience and religion for the sake of the common good and an engaged citizenship.... We also recognize the particular moment we are in, one of working for greater truth and reconciliation between aboriginal peoples in Canada and later arrivals. This situation calls us to deeper understanding of past wrongs and shared future hopes for living in harmony together. Reconciliation is, fundamentally, a spiritual process that needs to be accomplished first in the hearts of Canadians.”

Among non-Indigenous people in the land, some faith communities have been part of the Canadian fabric as it has unfolded since first contact with Europeans, while others are newly arrived. Faith communities also include Indigenous peoples from this land and from other parts of the world. This sets peoples and groups at different places along the path to reconciliation, while also offering shared opportunities through education and relationship building.

Recognizing that the government of Canada has endorsed the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People and that our Charter Vision refers to Article 12(1) of the Declaration as a key principle, the participant groups in the Canadian Interfaith Conversation are committed to developing understanding of the Declaration as a framework for reconciliation.

All persons in Canada, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, whether living on treaty or unceded land, have a mutual relationship to uphold and develop. We realize that healing is a process requiring listening and learning, and building relationships over time. As an interfaith group in pursuit of active and meaningful participation in the ongoing healing process of truth and reconciliation, we commit to studying the Calls to Action, beginning with Call 48, “a framework for reconciliation.” We commit to devoting time at each of our meetings to speak with one another and with Indigenous brothers and sisters, to encourage our members to pursue the Calls to Action in their own communities, and to speak publicly as occasions arise.

We recognize that conversation, like reconciliation, requires good listening practice and a willingness to work for good through mutual dialogue. The members of the Canadian Interfaith Conversation publicly support the work of truth and reconciliation, and commit to an ongoing implementation of it in our individual and collective hearts, lives, and practice.

Participants in the Canadian Interfaith Conversation are drawn from 39 faith communities and faith-based organizations. For more information see www.interfaithconversation.ca or email info@interfaithconversation.ca.