

# Media Development

2/2022

WACC

Celebrating Canada's  
Indigenous Media



# Join the World Association for Christian Communication!

WACC is an international organization that promotes communication as a basic human right, essential to people's dignity and community. Rooted in Christian faith, WACC works with all those denied the right to communicate because of status, identity, or gender. It advocates full access to information and communication, and promotes open and diverse media. WACC strengthens networks of communicators to advance peace, understanding and justice.

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## IN THE NEXT ISSUE

The title of the 3/2022 issue of *Media Development* will be "Democratizing communication and rediscovering solidarity". It will explore how digital technologies are helping to rebuild community and the digital challenges that face us all.



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# EDITORIAL

It is indisputable – from archaeological evidence but also from mitochondrial DNA – that people had already crossed into what we now call North America some 22,000 to 25,000 years ago. That’s at least 21,000 years before Norse explorers set foot on the continent and before the Italian trader John Cabot sighted Canada’s east coast.

Respecting this history, and in keeping with its rights-based approach to social justice, WACC acknowledges that its offices in Canada stand on land inhabited by Indigenous peoples for thousands of years. As newcomers and settlers, we are grateful for the opportunity to work here and we are thankful to the First Nations, Metis, and Inuit people who have taken care of this land. We recognize and deeply appreciate their historic connection to the country and their many contributions to shaping and strengthening it as a whole.

In Canada, the term First Nations refers to one of three distinct groups recognized as Aboriginal in the Constitution Act of 1982. The other two are the Métis and the Inuit. There are 634 First Nation communities (also known as reserves) in Canada, with First Nation governments. They form part of larger linguistic and cultural groups that vary across the country.

First Nations have a special relationship with the Crown and the people of Canada as set out in the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and manifested in Treaties, the Constitution Acts of 1867 and 1982, Canadian common law, International law, and as outlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

Historians have tended to group First Nations in Canada according to the six main geographic areas of the country:

- \* Woodland First Nations, who lived in dense boreal forest in the eastern part of the country;
- \* Iroquoian First Nations, who inhabited the

southernmost area, a fertile land suitable for planting corn, beans, and squash;

- \* Plains First Nations, who lived on the grasslands of the Prairies;
- \* Plateau First Nations, whose geography ranged from semi-desert conditions in the south to high mountains and dense forest in the north;
- \* Pacific Coast First Nations, who had access to abundant salmon and shellfish and the gigantic red cedar for building huge houses; and
- \* The First Nations of the Mackenzie and Yukon River Basins, whose harsh environment consisted of dark forests, barren lands, and the swampy terrain known as muskeg.

Many Inuit live in 53 communities across the northern regions of Canada in Nunangat, which means “the place where Inuit live”.

Approximately 64,235 Inuit live in Canada. Inuktitut is spoken throughout Nunangat, and each region has its own dialects. There are two written styles of Inuktitut: syllabics and roman orthography. Syllabics use symbols to represent sounds rather than letters. Roman orthography uses the English alphabet to sound out the words in Inuktitut.

The Métis people originated in the 1700s when French and Scottish fur traders married Aboriginal women, such as the Cree, and Anishinabe (Ojibway). Their descendants formed a distinct culture, collective consciousness, and nationhood in the Northwest.

Distinct Métis communities developed along the fur trade routes. This Métis Nation Homeland includes the three Prairie Provinces (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta), as well as parts of Ontario, British Columbia, the Northwest Territories, and the Northern United States. Canada has the only constitution in the world that recognizes a mixed-race culture, the Métis, as a rights-bearing Aboriginal people.

In 2019, Canada passed an Act respecting Indigenous languages. Its key provisions are to:





- \* Support and promote the use of Indigenous languages, including Indigenous sign languages.
- \* Support the efforts of Indigenous peoples to reclaim, revitalize, maintain and strengthen Indigenous languages.
- \* Establish a framework to facilitate the effective exercise of the rights of Indigenous peoples that relate to Indigenous languages.
- \* Establish measures to facilitate the provision of adequate, sustainable and long-term funding for the reclamation, revitalization, maintenance and strengthening of Indigenous languages.
- \* Support innovative projects and the use of new technologies in Indigenous language education and revitalization.

Important as linguistic rights are, this is not the whole story. Mass, social, and traditional media need to be able to play a similar role to meet the aspirations expressed by Ry Moran, director of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation:

“As a nation, the opportunity for Canada now is

to celebrate and acknowledge the critical role of ongoing resistance. It is through this resistance and the enhancement and rekindling of traditional practices, knowledges and Indigenous rights frameworks that Canada has the opportunity to become the nation that it has always been – a nation of many rich traditions, identities and systems coming together to find solutions to many of the deep-seated social tensions and challenges we face as a collective society. Reconciliation in this regard means arresting the attacks on Indigenous ways of knowing and being, and working from this day forward in a spirit of mutual respect and understanding.”<sup>2</sup>

However, as lamented by Cree Elder Doreen Spence in this issue of *Media Development*:

“Communication rights have not been respected for Indigenous Peoples. In most cases, the media have not advocated for First Peoples. We hardly ever see, hear, or read anything in the media about ourselves in a positive manner. There are thousands of murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls across Canada. If



the same happened to non-Indigenous women and girls, it would be all over the media. Ongoing discoveries of residential school burial sites have already attracted less media. It is evident that media continue to perpetuate stereotypes and myths, while ignoring and overlooking Indigenous issues; therefore, infringing our fundamental human rights. Indigenous People need responsibility and accountability from the media to create a just, equitable world for all nations.”

Marites Sison’s article in this same issue challenges Canadian journalists to do better, while noting that Indigenous journalists are taking it upon themselves to address gaps in mainstream news media by producing their own Indigenous content as well as podcasts. Another vibrant sector today seems to be film, which has seen a renaissance in recent years.

Recognising and implementing communication rights is a crucial first step towards bringing about mutual respect, greater understanding, and the possibility of reconciliation vis-à-vis the Indigenous peoples of Canada. ■

*The map on page 5 is a Stylized Map of Indigenous Cultural Groups in Canada, created for the Open Text “Economic Aspect of the Indigenous Experience in Canada” by Dr. Anya Hageman 2020. Map graphic by Pauline Galoustian. Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.*

#### Notes

1. From the “Introduction” to Truth and Reconciliation Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada.
2. <https://indigenouspeoplesatlasofcanada.ca/section/truth-and-reconciliation/>

# Communication rights for Indigenous People: A call to action

Doreen Spence

*Acknowledgement: I am from Saddle Lake Cree Nation in Alberta. I would like to honour my ancestors and our traditional ways of being. My sacred name interpreted from Cree is Bald Eagle Woman Who Leads. I live, work, and play in Mohkinstsis (Calgary, Alberta) which is the traditional territory of Treaty 7. I am honoured to share some of the teachings that I received from many Elders from across Canada. One of the Elders told me: “You’re speaking for those who never had a voice and have gone before us, for the present generations and the future generations to come.” I feel it is my responsibility to pass on these teachings and knowledge for the betterment of the whole.*

At the beginning of time, Creator gifted Indigenous People a set of laws to live by. Known as the Seven Sacred Laws these laws teach us how to cohabitate peacefully. We have a unique, rich, profound culture. Our relationships and bonds honour all life forms. Indigenous People exemplify these teachings by living, breathing and respecting creation and all that exists. Communication rights are top priority: they affect virtually every living entity.





*Doreen Spence (left) mentoring at the United Nations. Photo credit Beatrice Weyrich.*

“As with all rights, communication rights are given to us by the Creator of all things. My grandparents were my greatest teachers of the Creation Stories, which constantly remind me, of my rightful place in the Cycle of Life. They often reiterated that we are co-Creators... an extension of all that is. We are not above anyone else, nor are we less than the tiniest life form, such as our brothers and sisters the ants, who work collectively for the betterment of the whole. We could learn a lot from them. I was taught that everything is alive and that every living entity is to be respected.” (Excerpt from presentation to WACC Congress on “Communicating Peace: Building viable communities”, August 6, 2008.)

The critical fragility of our planet is a wake-up call! We need a healthy environment to live a healthy life. Global warming with extreme fires, flooding, and tornadoes have devastated and isolated many of our communities. When the floods and fires wiped out whole communities this past summer in British Columbia it affected people across the country. It caused a chain reaction. Roads were cut off. Transportation of goods and services were stalled. Food sources became scarce. In some cases, people were stranded in remote areas without water or their basic needs. Everyone was affected, both animals and humans lost their lives and livelihoods.

Elders had predicted that there would come a time when humanity would be brought to its knees. This is the time for humanity to rethink its values. What is most important is our relationships and the way we communicate with each another. The Cree word *wâhkôhtowin* describes our relationships with one another and everything. *Kisêwâtisiwin* is about living according to loving kindness gifted to us by Creator. Healing begins introspectively. When we live and treat each other accordingly it is a way of healing. Our teachings tell us that we must take good care of ourselves in order to regain balance and harmony.

### **Communicating in a loving manner**

How do we move forward? Together or separately? It is incumbent upon us as humans to communicate in a loving manner with each other – words can either be healing or hurtful. Communication is the core of any healthy relationship. Researchers quickly developed a vaccination for COVID, but we haven’t found a vaccination for the injustices that consistently permeate Indigenous communities.

There is an ever-present divisiveness in our country – a battle of rights – that has not been dealt with.

I learned that the bible teaches the same values as Indigenous Peoples. As a scholar of three years at the Berean Bible College, I related to the biblical teachings of Jesus and his disciples devoting their time to healing, feeding, educating, communicating, and caring for those less fortunate. Churches and congregations sponsor and support refugees and immigrants, but these core values are not equally distributed within Canadian society.

For instance, there is a church at the end of my block which sponsors an Asian commun-



ity. Churches advocate social justice by providing this sponsored community with a safe, secure space. I have never witnessed the same humanitarian gestures offered to Indigenous Peoples. Newcomers to this country are provided with all they need when they arrive. The same cannot be said for Indigenous Peoples. Many Indigenous communities are marginalized and still experience third world conditions in a developed country such as Canada.

My vision for the future is to use *wâhkôhtowin* as a foundation for building healthier relationships utilizing sharing/healing circles in every church across Canada. This is the answer to addressing the polarization Canadians currently experience.

Churches of all faiths must get involved with the Indigenous community to focus on our similar values and healing. The [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#) (TRC) Call to Action 59 specifically urges church parties and congregations to “learn about their church’s role in colonization, the history and legacy of residential schools” in understanding why apologies were essential for healing. Clergy and church leaders are urged to establish education and funding to build and strengthen relationships with Indigenous Peoples. Everyone has a major responsibility to move towards reconciliation, including the church communities.

## Silence and censorship

Colonization created communication rights



issues within Indigenous communities and were never spoken of. For instance, the Canadian government implored churches to “Kill the Indian within the Child” and deliberately covered up the truth. But the recent discovery of 215 graves of Indigenous children buried at the Kamloops Indian Residential school initiated conversation and has brought to light the complex truth and history. This is only the beginning of the chilling discovery of assimilation, genocide and the legacy of intergenerational trauma of our people. To date more than 1,000 graves have been found; it is known in Indigenous communities that there are thousands more to be discovered.

Much like the Holocaust, no one has ever communicated what happened initially. Connecting and communicating with First Peoples themselves is important to learn the true history of Canada. Indigenous Peoples are orators who carry living stories. Oral history helped us hold on to the stories and keep the truth alive. We have Elders, storytellers, knowledge keepers, healers, historians, leadership, and advocates. These voices have been silenced for hundreds of years, now is the time to listen and learn from them. We are stronger as a society when we learn and include everyone. Everyone must be treated respectfully and valued for their knowledge and contributions.

## Media responsibility and accountability

Reconciliation begins by implementing the legal binding instruments already in place, such as the Charter of Human Rights. [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) (UNDRIP), the framework for moving forward together, was manifested by Indigenous advocates expressing their grievances to the UN. TRC 94 Calls to Action are the means to actively engage in communication and reconciliation. People need to be proactive, brave, and compassionate enough to recognize their roles as they have a major responsibility in making this country better for all.

*With Elder Noah Cardinal harvesting medicines.*



Communication rights have not been respected for Indigenous Peoples. In most cases, the media have not advocated for First Peoples. We hardly ever see, hear, or read anything in the media about ourselves in a positive manner. There are thousands of murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls across Canada. If the same happened to non-Indigenous women and girls, it would be all over the media. Ongoing discoveries of residential school burial sites have already attracted less media. It is evident that media continue to perpetuate stereotypes and myths, while ignoring and overlooking Indigenous issues; therefore, infringing our fundamental human rights. Indigenous People need responsibility and accountability from the media to create a just, equitable world for all nations.

Media Calls to Action implore all media to be proactive in reconciliation efforts. There is power in representation. It is the media's duty to cover all sides of the story – not selectively. “Growing up I never experienced our people portrayed in a positive way. I used to hear Tonto on the radio, the Indian who could only say ‘Ugg’. I saw shows with cowboys and Indians too, reinforcing the way non-Indigenous people viewed us.”

By excluding us, media support the colonial system and further marginalizes Indigenous People. We experience the dichotomy between the two opposing forces, such as protestors appropriating our culture and no voices articulating wrongdoing. It is incumbent upon the media to speak and honour the truth to stop the spread of harmful fake news.

Opposing views on vaccine and mask mandates are just one example. These different points of view demonstrate a world of polarity which is triggering and even pitting family against family. Colonization dispossessed and denigrated Indigenous Peoples and their communities. Currently, colonization is a means of effective control over non-Indigenous people too. Indigenous People have demonstrated resilience through lived experience, knowledge, history, and stories that can heal all humanity. We, Indigenous People,

are ready to lead humanity forward through reconciliation.

Communication is imperative to form any meaningful relationships. Knowing the history of what really happened is critical to understanding the current situations. We know what is best for our communities and we are rightfully positioned to assert ourselves, including many well-educated lawyers and advocates. Our voices will no longer be silenced but must be heard and supported.

One Elder told me she was not allowed to get an education beyond grade three as mandated by the Indian Act. She told me that my work was to support and encourage our Indigenous youth to get a good education. Our Elders share stories about the buffalo being a sacred teacher. When the strong north winds blow, the males all surround the herd to protect them. The buffalo is the all-provider for the people. Education is the new buffalo.

There is potential for amazing work to be done in terms of moving forward. It is a two-way process. You must have equal participation in dialogue; it is not only to communicate but also to implement these values shared as humanity. This can only be done with deep introspective work because the healing begins with the individual. When one is unwell or biased then one is not giving their best. We have such a rich culture; it is important to share as it will only enhance a healthier world.

I faced many obstacles daily in my life journey. I attended Indian Day School for three years where I was forced to sleep on the unheated floor of the woodshed. I got up early in the morning to make a fire in the school. I would make porridge for the students and mix powdered milk for their breakfast. I was compelled to teach school all day to most of the students. I taught the parents English from 7 to 9 pm Monday nights and math on Wednesday nights. The teacher only taught the pre-schoolers and the little children. I was teaching fulltime while also taking correspondence and doing fundraisers for the school. Although I didn't attend residential school, this



was equally as brutal when it came to abuse because the teacher was mean and racist. If I was an immigrant or refugee, I would have never gone through that. I put myself through memorizing hundreds of bible verses in order to win a scholarship to Bible College. Every First Nations person will have their own story of struggle, marginalization and exclusion.

Through the traditional teachings of the past, we learn strength to work in the present in order to make the future a better place for the generations to come. Our teachings tell us that we must take care of ourselves to maintain balance and harmony. This must come from a place of *wahkohtowin*, building healthy relationships with *kisewatisiwin* and unconditional love. Despite all odds, Indigenous People through their resilience are still doing their utmost to contribute to humanity. Doing whatever it takes for the betterment of all, locally and globally. I pray that these words will be received with an open heart. All my relations. ■

*The author would like to give credit to Samantha Cardinal, who helped her with two-eyed seeing and computing skills for this article.*

Known as Grandmother to many, Doreen Spence is a Cree Elder who was born and raised on the Good Fish Lake Reservation. She is also a member of the Saddle Lake Band as her father was from Saddle Lake. Grandmother Doreen is retired after having spent many years nursing in active treatment hospitals. Currently, she is an active Elder in Residence with the Cumming School of Medicine's (CSM) Indigenous, Local and Global Health (ILGH) Office and mentors students and staff in the Alberta Indigenous Mentorship in Health Innovation (AIM-HI) Network and at Mount Royal and St. Mary's Universities. Healing and wellness are her life-long legacy and she is honoured to have been recognized by so many for doing what she is so passionate about. She has received an honorary Bachelor of Nursing from Mount Royal University; been appointed to the Order of Canada; received the Indspire Award, the Alberta Centennial Medal, the Alberta Human Rights Award, the Chief David Crowchild Memorial Award, and the YWCA Woman of Distinction Award. Doreen Spence was one of the 1,000 PeaceWomen nominated for the 2005 Nobel Peace Prize.

## Overcoming mistrust and misrepresentation: The challenge for Canadian journalists

Marites N. Sison

*In 2015, Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) released the findings of its six-year investigation into the history and impacts of the country's residential school system for Indigenous children, which operated for nearly 165 years. The report included "94 Calls to Action" in order to "redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of reconciliation" between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people of Canada.*

Included in the Calls to Action was a recommendation for Canadian journalists to become "well-informed about the history of Aboriginal Peoples and the issues that affect their lives." It also asked journalism programs and media schools in Canada to require its students to learn about the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous Law, and Aboriginal-Crown relations.<sup>1</sup>

In explaining the need to educate journalists, the TRC referenced the 1996 report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples' (RCAP), which examined a vast range of issues and called for a complete restructuring of the



relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and governments in Canada. Among the RCAP's conclusions was that racist public discourse towards Indigenous people persists, that Indigenous people are often excluded by the media, and they are portrayed in historical and damaging stereotypes, such as "angry warriors" and "pathetic victims."<sup>2</sup>

The TRC noted that "this historical pattern persists," and that "media coverage of Aboriginal issues remains problematic; social media and online commentary are often inflammatory and racist in nature." It cited an analysis of print and online media coverage of Aboriginal issues in Ontario conducted by the Journalists for Human Rights (JHR). The 2013 study found that Aboriginal-related stories "are barely on the radar of most media outlets,"<sup>3</sup> even though, as the RCAP underscored, "They are unique political entities, whose place in Canada is unlike that of any other people... Because of their original occupancy of the country, the treaties that recognized their rights, the constitution that affirms those rights, and their continued cohesion as peoples, they are nations within Canada."<sup>4</sup>

The JHR study found that when Aboriginal people "choose to protest or 'make noise' the number of stories about them increases." It also concluded that "as coverage related to the protests and talks between Aboriginal people and government become more frequent, the proportion of stories with a negative tone correspondingly increased." It noted that the largest share of negative stories were opinion columns and editorials "wherein Aboriginal people were criticized for their protests or direct-action initiatives."

Earlier studies conducted about the representation of Aboriginal people in Canadian news media have raised the same flags. In 2011, the University of Manitoba published *Seeing Red: A History of Natives in Canadian Newspapers*, by Mark Cronlund Anderson and Carmen L. Robertson, which examined how Canadian English-language newspapers have portrayed Aboriginal peoples from 1869 to 2009.

"What we found looking at newspaper coverage, especially in the 19th and early 20th centuries, is that, even though there were newspapers that had different political perspectives, when it came to the way they talked about racial identity, it was very, very similar – and that created the way settler Canadians think about Indigenous people through this very homogenized and, sadly, problematic lens,"<sup>5</sup> said Robertson, Canada Research Chair in North American Indigenous Visual and Material Culture at Carlton University, Ottawa.

### New stereotypes

An earlier study conducted in 2005 by University of the Fraser Valley professor Robert Harding found something else: "While many older stereotypes, such as Aboriginal people as warriors, are still present in news discourse, a number of stereotypes are emerging."<sup>6</sup> Harding, a researcher on Indigenous issues for over 20 years, analyzed 90 news items that appeared in three Canadian newspapers (*The Vancouver Sun*, *The Province*, and *The Globe and Mail*) from June 1 to September 30, 2002. He found that "the most prevalent emergent stereotype...is one which casts into doubt the ability of Aboriginal people to successfully manage their own affairs."

Harding noted that this new stereotype "appears at a critical juncture" in the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. More and more Aboriginal people are "reclaiming control over their lives, and in so doing, contesting the subservient nature of their relationship, as embodied by the Indian Act, with non-Aboriginal Canadian society." Across Canada, First Nations were assuming control over reserve finances, negotiating tripartite treaties between First Nations and provincial and federal governments, and reaping victories against provincial and federal governments with respect to land claims, hunting and fishing rights, and compensation for residential school abuse, he noted. "These issues have significant economic implications for the state, large corporations and other dominant interests in Canadian society."



The 2013 JHR study echo Harding's findings, noting that the "heightened coverage" generated by stories around that time about the [Attawapiskat First Nation protests and hunger strike](#) and the [Idle No More](#) protests, yielded twice as much negative as positive coverage, mostly editorials and opinion columns. "In other words, during periods of conflict and tension, what shapes the tone of media coverage is not necessarily journalists on the ground reporting facts, but senior writers based in urban newsrooms proffering opinion,"<sup>7</sup> noted Indigenous journalist Duncan McCue, reporter, and radio host for the Canadian Broadcasting Company (CBC), who offered expert analysis on the JHR study. This was nothing new, he wrote, since media coverage of previous flashpoints such as Oka (aka [Kanesatake Resistance](#) or the Mohawk Resistance), [Ipperwash](#) and [Gustafsen Lake](#) has shown "similar trends, and suggests these opinions are often rooted in century-old stereotypes rather than reality."

McCue acknowledged that Indigenous protests meet the criteria of newsworthiness, and that Aboriginal activists also tailor their mass actions to grab media attention. However, he also asked, "does today's front-page news of some traffic disruption in the name of Aboriginal land rights actually have its roots in a much older narrative – of violent and 'uncivilized' Indians who represent a threat to 'progress' in Canada?"

Stories about Indigenous protests often lack context, added Jorge Barrera, a Caracas-born journalist who has worked with the Aboriginal People's Television Network (APTN) and is now with CBC's Indigenous Unit. "The general public, and even editors and reporters, may have been unaware of the rising (and ongoing) tensions that led to the sudden explosion of protest activity," he said in the JHR study. "To many, the sudden flash mob round dances and a chief hunger striking in a teepee on an island in the Ottawa River would seem to have materialized out of the blue. Without any reference points, or noticeable narrative arcs, the emergence of the Idle No More movement and protests led to pre-

dictable public reactions, which were highlighted in the tone of the media coverage, with most of it tilting to negative tones as the protest and hunger strikes continued."

Instead of digging deeper into the roots of these protests, "public dialogue becomes mired in debates about whether protests are justified, or if the government has done enough, or not enough," said Barrera. As a result, "Yesterday's stand-off is soon forgotten and the next flare-up is covered as if nothing preceded it."

Negative media coverage has real-life consequences for Indigenous people and helps diminish public support for their self-governance initiatives, said Harding. "A lack of public support for these processes may make it easier for governments to justify procrastinating in negotiations with Aboriginal people and obstructing the attempts of Aboriginal communities to gain more autonomy over their lives."

When news media depict Aboriginal protests and calls for self-governance in a negative light, it "serves to protect the status quo and perpetuate the existing social and material inequality between Aboriginal people and other Canadians" concluded Harding.

Years later, the Canadian news media's coverage of [Tina Fontaine](#) and [Colten Boushie](#) again [raised similar concerns about the stereotyping of Indigenous people](#). Fontaine was a 15-year-old girl from Sagkeeng First Nation, who went missing and was found murdered in 2014; Colten Boushie, was a 22-year-old Cree man from the Red Pheasant First Nation in Saskatchewan, who was shot and killed in 2016 after he and four others drove onto a white farmer's property.

### **Mistrust and misrepresentation**

What about the dearth in mainstream news outlets of other stories about Indigenous people in general? The JHR study attributes it to the fact that "many journalists have never studied and do not understand Aboriginal people or the system governing Aboriginal people, so they avoid the topic entirely." News editors and producers who



decide the day's news agenda also tend to avoid "archetypical 'Aboriginal stories' because they feel that news consumers are tired of hearing 'the same old stories' raising 'the same old issues,' said the study. Another reason could be the lack of easy access to Aboriginal communities, due to travel costs and lack of readily available Aboriginal sources for stories, it added.

Limited contact with Indigenous voices also stems from mistrust toward mainstream media, according to CBC journalist Jessica Deer, who is Indigenous. "I can understand because there's been years of misrepresentation in a lot of coverage when it comes to Indigenous people," she told a 2019 CBC Montreal panel discussion in on how Indigenous stories are told.<sup>8</sup>

Indigenous storyteller Greg Horn, who spoke in the same forum, said it's not uncommon for him to get calls from mainstream journalists seeking his opinions on Aboriginal issues, and he has to tell them to dig deeper and find local Indigenous people to interview. "If you're looking to tell stories, talk to the people affected, don't talk 'at' them," said Horn, editor of *Iori:wase*, a print and multimedia online newspaper based in Kahnawake Mohawk Territory.

Another panellist, Métis filmmaker Michelle Smith, said she wants mainstream media to feature more stories about the vibrancy and resilience of Indigenous communities, not just ones that focus on stereotypes around violence, homelessness, and addictions.

Results of WACC's 2020 Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) in Canada confirm this observation. While Indigenous persons constituted 6.4% of news stories analysed by the GMMP (a much higher figure compared to Latin America's 3%), they mostly appeared in stories about politics and government and in stories about social and legal issues. They were absent in stories about the economy, science and health, gender and related issues, arts, media, and sports.<sup>9</sup>

Panellists acknowledged that non-Indigenous journalists are capable of telling Indigenous stories in respectful and balanced ways, but that they must be knowledgeable about Indigenous

issues. Having Indigenous voices and perspectives in the story is also critical, they said. And, ideally, there should be Indigenous journalists in every newsroom, not just in Indigenous led news media like the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) and the public national broadcaster CBC.

In 1994, only four out of 2,620 or 0.15% reporters, copy editors, photographers and supervisors were Aboriginal, according to a study conducted by the diversity committee of the Canadian Newspaper Association.<sup>10</sup> Twenty years later, in 2021, a Canadian Association of Journalists (CAJ) diversity survey showed that Aboriginal journalists constituted 6% of the news media.<sup>11</sup> However, 75% of them are employed either at APTN or CBC. "About nine in 10 [newsrooms] have no Black or Indigenous journalists."<sup>12</sup>

The JHR study has urged journalists to also do more in fostering relationships with Indigenous Peoples and actually visiting communities they're reporting on. McCue has created a ground-breaking online guide for journalists called [Reporting in Indigenous Communities](#). The guide offers "useful ideas and practical methods for finding and developing news stories," checklists, and a selection of background information, terminology, maps and other useful resources for non-Indigenous and Indigenous journalists.

Other Indigenous journalists are also taking it upon themselves to [produce Indigenous content](#) that address gaps in mainstream news media, where conglomeration continues, and [ownership is concentrated](#) in the hands of a small number of companies.

In December 2021, three veteran women journalists and storytellers produced [Auntie Up!](#), a podcast described as "a celebration of Indigenous women talking about important stuff." The show, the producers say, aims to feature stories without the colonial lens. "We know what is missing, and we don't need the permission of legacy media gatekeepers," said Kim Wheeler, a host and producer of the show.<sup>13</sup>



Reflecting on the JHR study, Cindy Blackstock, Gitxsan activist for child welfare and executive director of the First Nations and Family Caring Society of Canada, underlined a free press' responsibility "to report on matters the public needs to know, not just what the public wants to hear." If the news media is to contribute to healing and reconciliation in the country, it must address the under-representation and mis-representation of Indigenous people in its coverage, she said. "Clearly, treating First Nations, Metis and Inuit Children equitably has to be a basis for any meaningful progress," said Blackstock.

Journalists, she stressed, "have a historic opportunity to set the bedrock of truth telling from which reconciliation and the full realization of Canadian values can grow. Let's hope they don't miss it." ■

#### Notes

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2. [The Media, Aboriginal People and Common Sense](#), by Robert Harding, The Canadian Journal of Native Studies, XXV.
3. [Buried Voices: Media Coverage of Aboriginal Issues in Ontario](#), Media Monitoring Report 2010-2013, Journalists for Human Rights.
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# Canada's Act Respecting Indigenous Languages

## Assembly of First Nations

*In Canada, Bill C-91, an Act Respecting Indigenous languages, became law on June 21, 2019. The legislation was co-developed by the Department of Canadian Heritage and the three national Indigenous organizations: the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) and the Métis Nation of Canada (MNC). First Peoples' Cultural Council actively supported the development of the Act through the facilitation of engagement with B.C. First Nations, advocacy with the two Ministers of Heritage and the department, participation on the AFN's Technical Committee on Language and presentations to the parliamentary and senate committees reviewing the bill.*

The Act Respecting Indigenous Languages commits the Government of Canada to supporting and funding Indigenous-led language reclamation, revitalization, maintenance and strengthening activities. It recognizes and reaffirms Indigenous language rights as inherent, Constitutional (Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982), and international human rights, via the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP, 2007), endorsed by Canada in 2016.

The Act responds to years of First Nations advocacy, as well as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action 13, 14, and 15.



Under the Act, the support and funding provided by the Government of Canada will be reviewed on an annual basis by a new Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages. The Act itself will undergo Parliamentary review every three years. The Act will also be independently reviewed every five years, in consultation with Indigenous Peoples.

## General background

Language allows us to share and communicate culture, world views, knowledge systems, values, traditions, customs, history, spirituality, and social and political identity to future generations. First Nations languages are integral to our sense of self and a key aspect of self-determination. Despite their importance, all Indigenous languages in Canada are in danger of disappearing. Over generations, assimilative policies and practices have had a significant impact on language loss and the disruption of the intergenerational transmission of First Nations languages and cultures.

There is grave urgency to develop fluency in First Nations languages. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) reports that three-quarters of Indigenous languages in Canada are “definitely”, “severely” or “critically” endangered. In Canada’s 2016 Census of Population, only 20% of First Nations people could converse in an Indigenous language, down almost 6 percentage points from 2006. If we continue down the current path, First Nations languages, like many Indigenous languages around the world, may be lost. It is essential that drastic actions are taken to offset the erosion and loss of First Nations languages.

There has also been a general growing interest in Indigenous languages in Canada over the past several decades. Language revitalization is now on the government’s legislative and policy agenda. Nanos Research conducted a survey for the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) in February 2017 and found that about 74% of Canadians supported or somewhat supported the creation on an Indigenous Languages Act. Respondents also linked the value of language as important to

culture and identity.

Further, examples of successful Indigenous language revitalization are emerging across the globe, such as in the revitalization of Te Reo Māori, Hawai’ian, Scots Gaelic, and Welsh. Some dormant languages have also become *living languages* again, including Wampanoag, Myaamia, and Hebrew. These examples provide some best practices that can be drawn from in planning for the reclamation, revitalization, maintenance, and strengthening of Indigenous languages in Canada, while respecting the unique situation of each First Nations language.

## Why is legislation important for First Nations languages?

In 1998, a state of emergency on First Nations languages was declared by the Chiefs-in-Assembly through Resolution 35/1998, *First Nation Languages*, highlighting the central role of language to First Nations culture and the urgent need to reverse further language loss and degradation. The 1996 Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and the 2005 Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Culture’s “[Towards a New Beginning](#)” report are both historic documents calling for action in the recognition of the importance of Indigenous languages. First Nations languages are inherent, treaty and constitutional rights (Section 35, Constitution Act, 1982).

Language has been affirmed as a fundamental international human right by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which puts binding treaty obligations on Canada as a signatory. The [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) contains specific articles on Indigenous languages. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s (TRC) [Calls to Action](#) also includes a number of calls (13, 14, and 15) directly related to languages.

The Government of Canada has formally endorsed the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and committed to the implementation of the TRC Calls to Action. Various other international legal instruments support



these rights, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Universal Declaration on Linguistic Rights.

These existing languages rights have been long ignored, and must be actively recognized and protected in law to secure their survival and revival. Legislation is considered one of the required elements for successful language resurgence, along with effective language policies, good language education practices, adequate and sustainable funding, and community mobilization.<sup>1</sup> Legislative recognition puts requirements on the federal government to provide funding with the goal of preserving and revitalizing Indigenous languages and restoring fluency.

The AFN [Closing the Gap](#) document (2015) also called for significant investments toward the revitalization of Indigenous languages, as significant funding and support is necessary for successful revitalization efforts.

Legislation also helps ensure that the availability of funding is not completely dependent on the current government. This is essential for continuous action and sufficient, predictable, sustainable funding that supports long-term language planning.

### **Recognition, affirmation, protection**

Legal recognition in federal legislation will raise the status of Indigenous languages, as seen with Indigenous or minority languages in other jurisdictions at either the provincial/regional or national level both in Canada and abroad. For example, greater awareness and knowledge about Indigenous languages can increase both support (including promotional efforts by the government) and respect for the language itself (as seen in New Zealand, Hawaii, South Africa and others). Recognizing, affirming, protecting and implementing First Nations linguistic rights is an essential piece to ensuring the revival of the First Languages of these lands.

In response to international and national legal instruments – as well as decades of First Nations advocacy – the AFN, ITK, MNC and PCH<sup>2</sup> initiated a co-development process for

Indigenous languages legislation to protect and revitalize Indigenous languages in Canada. The Act has been drafted in such a way that it further commits the Government of Canada to implementing the UN Declaration and the TRC Calls to Action. The federal government agreed to take action to implement both of these instruments and the Act strengthens the obligation to act on these commitments. The Act also recognizes and affirms Indigenous language rights as Section 35, Constitution Act, 1982 rights.

Together, these legal instruments, among other international treaties and agreements provide a base for the protection and revitalization of First Nations languages. The Act builds on these foundational pieces to ensure support and adequate, sustainable and long-term funding to meet the goal of reclaiming, revitalizing, maintaining, and strengthening First Nations languages.

### **Self-determination and traditional knowledge**

Restoring fluency and the active use of First Nations languages is vital to cultural continuity and a fundamental part of self-determination. Language is key to transmitting traditional knowledge across generations. Traditional wisdom is passed on through stories and through the very structure of First Nations languages. For example, critical environmental knowledge on animals, plants, and their medicinal uses, is passed on through creation stories and ceremonies expressed in our languages. Consider how a single word for animals, plants, or place names tells a history and experience that would otherwise been unknown.

Language is intimately tied to culture and the transmission of traditional knowledge, including spirituality, values, history, identity, and world views. Studies show that cultural continuity is a determinant of health.<sup>3</sup> Further, First Nations with a strong sense of cultural and linguistic identity have better socio-economic outcomes. For example, language education and fluency has been found to result in improved education outcomes. These impacts are essential to closing the



gap for First Nations of all ages. The recognition of Indigenous culture and language in legislation can play an important role in improving education, employment, health outcomes, and the overall well-being of First Nations people.

The importance of language and culture is known to, and respected by, many of our First Nations youth. First Nations youth are taking steps to reclaim and revitalize their languages. Despite significant barriers to learning, the National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health (NCCAH, 2016) found that a clear majority of First Nations youth – living in self-governing nations, *on-reserve*, and *off-reserve* – are interested in participating in cultural and language programming.

### Understanding the Act Respecting Indigenous Languages

The purpose of Bill C-91 is to enable the exercise of Indigenous language rights. The Act creates legal assurance for adequate, sustainable, and long-term funding and support for Indigenous-led initiatives to reclaim, revitalize, maintain, and strengthen Indigenous languages.

What does this mean? The Act supports you in your language initiatives with the ultimate aim of restoring fluency and ensuring First Nations languages remain living languages. Legislation, used as a tool by First Nations for language revitalization, can advance the rights, needs, and interests of First Nations with respect to languages, cultures, traditions and knowledge systems.

- \* The Act affirms and recognizes Indigenous language rights as included in Section 35, Constitution Act, 1982.
- \* In the preamble – and in the purpose – the Act commits to contributing to the implementation of the UN Declaration, as it relates to Indigenous languages, advances international standards in the protection and exercise of Indigenous language rights, including protecting traditional knowledge intellectual property, providing education, and establishing media – in Indigenous languages.

- \* The Act also further commits the federal government to implementing the TRC Calls to Action 13, 14, and 15.
- \* The Act advances the status and vitality of Indigenous languages in Canada through the affirmation of Indigenous language rights and by strengthening Ministerial responsibilities, duties and functions with respect to the reclamation, revitalization, maintenance, and strengthening of Indigenous languages.
- \* The Act recognizes that Indigenous languages played a significant role in the establishment of Indigenous-European relations.
- \* The Act acknowledges the contribution of discriminatory and assimilative policies, such as residential schools, forced relocation, and the [Sixties Scoop](#) in eroding Indigenous languages.
- \* The Act acknowledges that Indigenous languages are fundamental to Indigenous identities, cultures, spirituality, relationships to the land, world views and self-determination.
- \* The Act recognizes the Government of Canada's role in supporting the work of existing Indigenous-led entities with a mandate for Indigenous language reclamation, revitalization, maintenance, and strengthening – and supporting the establishment of such entities, where desired, if they do not exist.
- \* The Act acknowledges that the control and initiative to lead Indigenous language reclamation, revitalization, maintenance, and strengthening is best placed in the hands of Indigenous Peoples.
- \* The Act establishes the Government of Canada's commitment to consulting with Indigenous governments and Indigenous governing bodies to facilitate the provision of adequate, sustainable and long-term funding for the reclamation, revitalization, maintenance and strengthening of Indigenous languages.
- \* The Act highlights that federal institutions or its agency or mandatary may provide access to services in an Indigenous language if they have the capacity and there is sufficient de-



mand.

- \* The Act establishes an independent Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages that will champion and support language revitalization and review and report on Canada's compliance to its obligations under the Act, including funding.
- \* The Act acknowledges that the primary work and activity regarding revitalization and strengthening Indigenous languages belongs in the communities.
- \* The Act acknowledges the need for access to interpreters and translated government documents. Interpretation and translation will be provided by the Government of Canada, where it is considered warranted or appropriate. The provision of translation and interpretation services, including processes for requests and quality, will be further discussed on a co-development basis.
- \* The Act facilitates First Nations governments, governing bodies, or entities to enter into agreements or arrangements with all levels of government to reclaim, revitalize, maintain, and strengthen their ancestral languages. ■

Source: *A Guide to An Act respecting Indigenous languages: A Tool for First Nations Language Revitalization 2019-2020*. Assembly of First Nations.

#### Notes

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# An Indigenous peoples' approach to climate justice

Deborah McGregor

*Climate change has been identified as the “defining issue of our time” by many of the world’s leading experts and the diagnosis of planetary health is dire.*

The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services has concluded that goals for achieving sustainability “cannot be met by current trajectories” and UN secretary-general António Guterres has referred to humanity’s “war on nature” as “senseless and suicidal”.

The term “climate justice” has emerged to explain how those who are least responsible for climate change – the most vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalised – tend to suffer its gravest impacts.

There are few groups that this applies to more than Indigenous peoples, who have been described as “among the poorest of the poor and, thus, the most threatened segment of the world’s population in terms of social, economic and environmental vulnerability.”

Understanding the role of Indigenous peoples in determining future climate policies does not only consist of how climate change affects their livelihoods and survival – although that is critically important.

Indigenous leadership is also necessary if climate justice is to be achieved, as is support for advancing transformative and innovative solutions that account for all life.

## Exclusion is the norm

Indigenous peoples around the world, from the



First Nations in Canada to the Maori of New Zealand, can – and do – play an important role in climate assessment, mitigation, adaptation and governance.

An [International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs](#) (IWGIA) and [International Labour Organization joint report](#) noted in 2021 that Indigenous peoples were responsible for protecting an estimated 22% of the planet's surface and 80% of biodiversity.

Research also [suggests](#) that levels of biodiversity are equal, if not higher, in areas with a greater Indigenous presence and where Indigenous languages [remain spoken](#).

The role played by Indigenous groups, in particular women, in environmental protection has been recognised, with UN Climate Change executive secretary Patricia Espinosa recently [stating](#):

“Indigenous women carry the knowledge of their ancestors while also leading their communities into a resilient future. When Indigenous women engage, climate policies and actions at every level benefit from their holistic, nature-focused knowledge and leadership.”

However, despite recognition of Indigenous peoples' contributions, serious gaps remain in terms of involvement in generating climate solutions. Exclusion remains the norm.

In response to the release of part one of the [most recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) (IPCC) assessment report, [Tunga Rai](#), representative of the Rai Indigenous people of Nepal, observed that Indigenous peoples and their knowledge continue to be marginalised in such assessments. He stated:

“It is unfortunate to see that the climate science, including [the] summary for policymakers of the IPCC report, does not recognise our distinct knowledge systems/Indigenous science and the positive contribution of Indigenous peoples in climate action. The summary unveils the changes in the atmosphere, ocean, cryosphere and biosphere, but fails to cite even

once human rights and the rights of Indigenous peoples. This gesture is even more threatening than climate change itself, for Indigenous peoples.”

### **Indigenous planetary health and climate assessments**

Indigenous peoples [have](#) diagnosed, assessed and offered their own solutions to a warming climate, as exemplified by Indigenous environmental and climate change declarations at international, national and local levels over the years. For example, the [Kimberley Declaration](#) of 2002 states:

“Since 1992 [when the [UN Framework Convention on Climate Change](#) was agreed in Rio de Janeiro], the ecosystems of the Earth have been compounded in change. We are in crisis. We are in an accelerating spiral of climate change that will not abide by unsustainable greed.”

As climate change has intensified, so have assaults on Indigenous self-determination. This was noted in the [Kari-Oca 2](#) declaration, which was released in parallel with the UN's [Rio +20 meeting](#) in 2012 and ratified by more than 500 Indigenous peoples:

“Since Rio 1992, we as Indigenous peoples see that colonisation has become the very basis of the globalisation of trade and the dominant capitalist global economy. The exploitation and plunder of the world's ecosystems and biodiversity, as well as the violations of the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples that depend on them, have intensified... Our rights to self-determination, to our own governance and own self-determined development, our inherent rights to our lands, territories and resources are increasingly and alarmingly under attack by the collaboration of governments and transnational corporations.”

In releasing these statements, Indigenous peoples [have called](#) into question the legitimacy and applicability of global and nation-state pol-



itical and legal mechanisms, as these same states and international governing bodies continue to fail Indigenous peoples around the world.

As my colleagues and I [have outlined](#), Indigenous peoples' assessments of the state of the world's climate and environment, based on their own knowledge and understanding, have found the global approaches thus far to be lacking in achieving climate justice.

In response, Indigenous peoples [have proposed](#) a path forward that promotes Indigenous and human rights, as well as the rights of nature, aimed at bringing about a "just, equitable and sustainable world".

### Decolonising climate change

[Eriel Tchekwie Deranger](#), executive director of [Indigenous Climate Action](#), has [stated](#) that "the climate crisis cannot be addressed in any meaningful way without addressing its root causes – capitalism, colonialism and extractivism".

Indigenous climate justice frames the challenge of global warming – along with other environmental injustices – as inevitably tied to, and symptomatic of, these ongoing processes of colonialism, dispossession, violence and violations of Indigenous and human rights.

It also recognises that there are unique considerations to be taken into account specifically in relation to Indigenous peoples – including recognition of Indigenous knowledge systems and sustainable livelihoods – and that addressing these issues must be led by Indigenous peoples.

Over the years, Indigenous peoples have borne witness to transformations of the natural environment throughout periods of historical and ongoing colonialism, such as widespread deforestation and pollution of water sources. These experiences have equipped them with knowledge of how to navigate catastrophic environmental change, although these dimensions of Indigenous experience have thus far had [limited impact](#) on climate change policy.

What is required is a profoundly different set of logics to attend to the full scale of climate

justice and clearly diagnose, assess and then problem-solve climate change. Such approaches already exist in the lives, experiences and knowledge of Indigenous peoples.

Indigenous peoples prioritise responsibility to future generations in their relationships with the Earth, as well as "non-human relatives", [including](#) the trees, fish, animals, skies and water. These are [seen as](#) possessing spirit and agency, [recognising that](#) we are made of the same elements, and thus are part of the same community.

They also recognise that nature itself, or "Mother Earth", has [rights](#) that must be respected, and this should be recognised in government-formulated policies and legal processes. This perspective was recognised internationally in 2017 at the [COP23 climate conference](#), in a document released by Indigenous groups titled [Rights of Nature: Rights-Based Law for Systemic Change](#).

It stated that, "we must stop treating the Earth as a commodity", adding that:

"Recognising rights of nature means that human activities and development must not interfere with the ability of ecosystems to absorb their impacts, to regenerate their natural capacities, to thrive and evolve, and requires that those responsible for destruction, including corporate actors and governments be held fully accountable."

An innovative response based on Indigenous, nature-derived logics is evident in the [Universal Declaration of Rights of Mother Earth](#), generated at the [World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth](#) in Cochabamba, Bolivia over a decade ago. It pointed to a different logic of human-nature relationships that can inform the economic, social, political and legal transformation called for by international scientific assessments of the state of the planet.

Indigenous peoples' declarations seek in essence to "[decolonise](#)" these broader processes, an approach that [involves](#) addressing the root causes



of climate change, advancing self-determination and recognising Indigenous people as partners at the decision-making table in a nation-to-nation framework. In practice, this means focusing on local climate initiatives as an expression of sovereignty and moving towards a “just transition” for communities.

Such efforts are chronicled in a recent [Indigenous Environmental Network](#) report, in collaboration with [Oil Change International](#), which examines Indigenous resistance to fossil fuel projects and highlights the importance of land defence, and the assertion and exercise of rights and responsibilities to the Earth.

### Moving forward

Indigenous climate justice advocates [argue](#) that as long as these dominant world systems fail to embrace the transformation required and offered by Indigenous peoples – including an acceptance of the rights of Mother Earth – humanity as a whole will continue to fail the planet.

The [UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) (UNDRIP) could form an integral part of any international climate change policy or initiative on the matter, particularly as it relates to Indigenous and human rights. Currently, it does not.

What is more, despite some recognition of Indigenous contributions, challenges remain to full, meaningful and equitable participation in the upcoming COP26 [ed. Now COP27] climate summit.

With the world still [falling short](#) on climate action and planetary health deteriorating, Indigenous climate leadership [is essential](#) in moving forward. ■

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# Professional training and empowerment for Indigenous communicators in Canada

Shannon Avison

*The Indian Communication Arts (INCA) program was one of the first programs at the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (SIFC) which, when it was established in 1976, was the first Indian-controlled post-secondary institution in Canada. Forty years later, our name has changed to Indigenous Communication Arts, our College has become the First Nations University of Canada, we offer certificate and diploma programs, and we are ready to launch a four-year degree. We have used innovative strategies that reflect the values of kinship and reciprocity embedded in our languages, to adapt to the digital age and provide university training for Indigenous storytellers, who work in mainstream and Indigenous media across Canada.*

**S**IFC was established by leaders and veterans from the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, now the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN). Indian-control of Indian education started with K-12 schools, and expanded to post-secondary when the FSIN partnered with the University of Regina in 1976 to establish SIFC. The first programs were Indi-

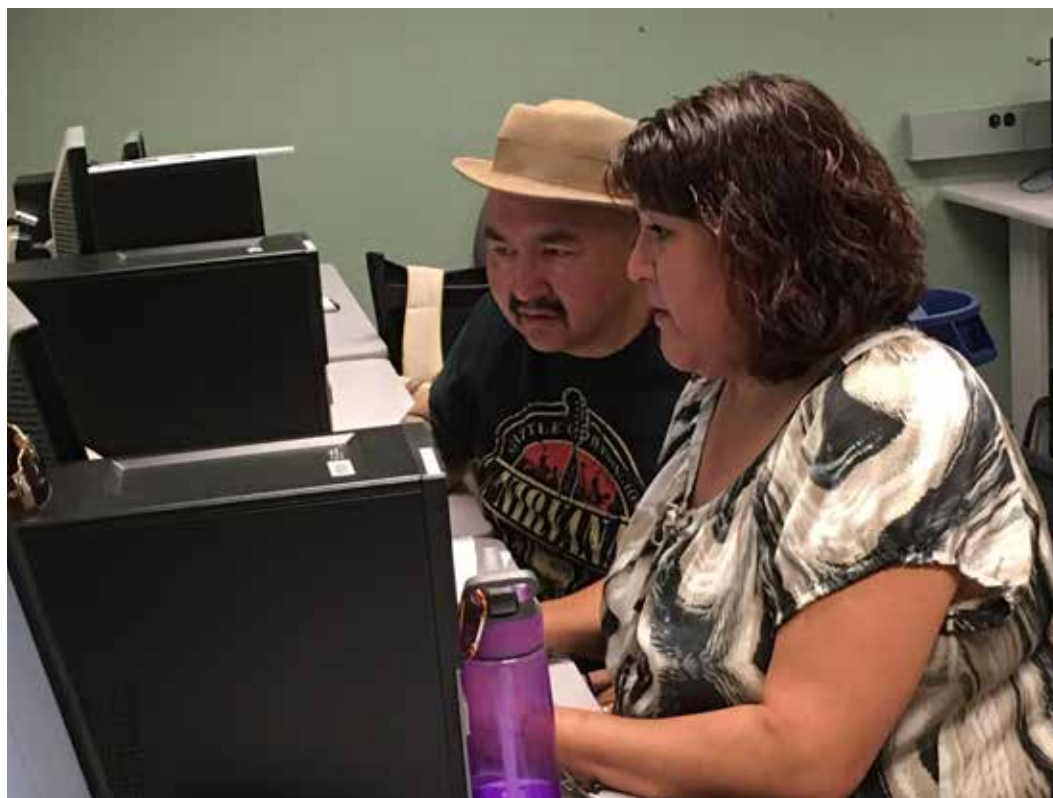


Mervin Brass, Managing Editor, CBC North, with student Andrea Dustyhorn at the INCA Summer Institute, 2018.

an Fine Art, Indian Languages, Indian Education, Indian Studies, and Indian Social Work. INCA was piloted in 1982 with a two-month crash course and established as a two-year certificate program in 1983. It provided an introduction to journalism and trained journalists to work in Indigenous media, including the FSIN's monthly magazine and tabloid, *Saskatchewan Indian* and the *Moccasin Telegraph* weekly radio show, and for regional native communication societies.

In 1983, the Missinipi Broadcasting Corporation was established to provide Indigenous radio in the north. Today it broadcasts to over 70 communities in English, Cree, Dene, and Michif. About 30 community radio stations broadcast in local Indigenous languages for part of the day and use MBC as a wrap-around service. INCA provided training for broadcasters like Pauline Clarke, who returned home to Southend and established Reindeer Lake Communications. Pauline has been the voice (in Cree and English) on CIRL 97.9 FM for 20 years. This year, she signed up for a refresher in Radio and Podcast Production (INCA 351), which was available remotely because of COVID.

In the early 1990s, we started offering the INCA Summer Institute in Journalism and an INCA Internship. These unique "courses" give students hands-on training and supervised work experience. The Summer Institute is a six-week "crash course" that is offered every second year from May to June. Most students complete their internships in July or August; but internships are available year-round. INCA can be combined with Bachelor's degrees in English, Political Science, Indigenous Studies, Languages, and other programs. Kerry Benjoe completed INCA and a BA (English) before she started her 17-year career as a reporter at the *Regina Leader-Post*. Today, she is Managing Editor of our province's



monthly *Eagle Feather News* and a sessional instructor in INCA.

Instructors in the Summer Institute are all working journalists and most are Indigenous. Many are INCA graduates who have worked in the media for decades, including Nelson Bird, Assignment Editor at CTV; Mervin Brass, Regional Director of CBC North; and Connie Walker, Host and Managing Editor of Gimlet Media. APTN sends producers to teach our students to produce news stories for APTN National News and [aptnnews.ca](https://www.aptnnews.ca). CTV Saskatchewan worked with students to produce an episode of their weekly *Indigenous Circle*. MBC broadcasts our students' radio programs across their network. CBC Saskatchewan and the CBC network have aired student-produced programs on National Indigenous Peoples' Day.

When it was established, INCA relied on instructors and facilities at the University of Regina. Today, INCA has dedicated classrooms, a newsroom, and production studios. Partnerships and special projects have supported acquisition of equipment and provided professional opportunities for students. The INCA program has become a go-to program for community organizations that want to support student learning and portfolio development, at the same time as they produce media projects economically. INCA faculty have coordinated opportunities for students



to work on contracts, including publications for events, podcast series and documentaries for bands, tribal councils, provincial and national organizations.

When we were forced to switch to online learning due to COVID, we took it as an opportunity to offer our diploma program remotely for the first time. We also developed a one-year certificate in Indigenous Journalism and Communication (INJC) and promoted it directly to individuals who work and volunteer at Indigenous media organizations across Canada – with a focus on community radio stations that operate in almost every Indigenous community in northern Canada. In 2021-22, radio announcers from CIRL (Southend, Saskatchewan), Paradise Radio (Cowessess First Nation), CKLB (NWT) and Tsilhqot'in Radio (Williams Lake, BC) are completing our courses in Radio and Podcast Production, Media Business, Photojournalism, and Public Relations. The INJC will be offered remotely every second academic year, and students only need to leave their communities for six weeks to complete the Summer Institute.

### Indigenous media in Canada

The evolution of Indigenous media in Canada is the subject of one of our core courses. There were many colonial publications produced by missionaries, residential schools and the Department of Indian Affairs. However in 1969 two key events spurred the development of Indigen-



ous-controlled media: Indigenous organizations rejected the 1969 White Paper, which proposed the elimination of Indian status; and, Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau had the goal of creating “a just society” and believed media was important for democracy and engagement in the public sphere. This led the federal government to establish the Native Communications Program (1973-1990) and the Northern Native Broadcast Access Program (1983 to today).

Indigenous media expanded rapidly after 1972, when communication satellites provided southern programming to every community with a dish. We remember the role of organizations like Taqramiut Nipingat in Arctic Quebec and Inuit Broadcasting Corporation in what is now Nunavut, in demanding access to broadcasting licenses and funding. Television Northern Canada was established in 1992 and evolved into the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) in 1999. Many of the early visionaries and employees at TVNC and APTN had received journalism training in INCA, including INCA graduate John (JC) Catholique, who was on the first APTN Board.

Indigenous radio and television broadcasters continue to access funding from Canadian Heritage under the Northern Aboriginal Broadcasting (NAB) program and Indigenous Language and Culture programs. INCA students are employed by many of these Indigenous media organizations, and the INCA program has received direct support to provide training and employment for broadcasters and podcasters. Most recently, our *pîkiskwêwin: Sharing Our Endangered Indigenous Languages On Radio and Online* project received funding from the Government of Canada for two years, ending March 31, 2023.

*pîkiskwêwin*, which means “language” in Cree, has supported training for over 40 First Nation and Métis podcast producers, ranging in age from 18 to 71. This has inspired a new

*Paul Dornstaeder, Executive Producer, CBC Saskatchewan with INCA student Cole Cappo.*





*Students Jaida Beaudin-Herney (left) and Jennifer Francis scrum with federal Minister Jane Philpott at the 2018 Summer Institute.*

Using the languages to do journalism is one way to revitalize the languages. Broadcasting and podcasting are being used to promote Indigenous languages to listeners and learners of all ages.

Expanding INCA to a four-year Bachelor of Arts program has been a dream since it was established (Spence, 1985). It will answer the Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) Calls to Action: “We call upon Canadian journalism programs and media schools to require education for all students on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal-Crown relations” (TRC, 2015). Our INCA students have lived this history and understand the context of stories they are assigned in mainstream newsrooms. Some of our students are non-Indigenous and new Canadians, who leave the program much better prepared to cover Indigenous stories.

### **Empowerment for transformation**

After almost 40 years, INCA is in a strong position to establish a Bachelor of Indigenous Communication Arts. Our experience and reputation training journalists to work for Indigenous and mainstream media organizations, and to work in Indigenous languages, distinguishes us from all other journalism programs in Canada.

Our track record of training Indigenous journalists as reporters and producers, and now as managers and senior managers, makes us a reliable source of qualified and talented journalists for mainstream media. INCA has a network of graduates, mentors, and employers who act as advisors. We are adapting to the digital age by tapping into the expertise of Indigenous journalists who work in newsrooms, and updating our facilities in consultation with industry experts.

development in the INCA program. Although some INCA students are fluent in their languages and have found employment in Indigenous language media, the *pîkiskwêwin* project has helped us evolve new strategies for supporting them and others to develop their language skills to work in Indigenous language broadcasting – one of the most effective ways to revitalize the languages.

A major challenge when asking First Nation and Métis people to use and develop their language skills is “language trauma.” In residential schools, Indigenous languages were literally beaten out of children. Many parents made the decision to not teach their languages to their children, to protect them from abuse and ridicule. Through this project, we became aware of the phenomenon of “latent/silent speakers,” which is the focus of research by scholars like Charlotte Ross, who is involved with *pîkiskwêwin* as both advisor and producer.

*pîkiskwêwin* producers range from language learners to fluent speakers. They are producing podcasts in Indigenous languages – a Michif cooking show; interviews in Saulteaux, Nakota, Dakota, Cree, Michif, and Dene about topics like parenting, prayer, food security, mental health, leadership, education, culture, buffalo teachings, lullabies and legends. Producers are learning their languages by working with speakers who help them translate their questions before conducting their interviews. We have all come to realize that “the language spirit is strong.”



INCA empowers Indigenous peoples to have a voice in the transformation of Canadian society. For 40 years, we have built a network of Indigenous communicators – from entry-level students to reporters with decades of experience in national news organizations, to award winning radio and television producers, to investigative journalists, to a regional director of a national network.

Our alumni from 30 years ago know what it was like to be “the only Indian in the newsroom.” They bring that knowledge and share strategies for dealing with ignorance, racism, and lateral violence with students in the INCA Summer Institute. And they support students with ongoing mentorship as they enter the industry.

Recent Canadian legislation reflects an understanding of the role of Indigenous media in supporting culture and language. The *Indigenous languages Act*, June 21, 2019, declared that “Indigenous-language media and lifelong learning of Indigenous languages ... are essential to restoring and maintaining fluency in those languages.”

The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, received Royal Assent in 2021. It requires that Canada work in partnership with Indigenous peoples to implement the UN Declaration. This includes Article 16, which declares that “Indigenous peoples have the right to establish their own media in their own languages and to have access to all forms of non-indigenous media without discrimination,” and “States shall take effective measures to ensure that State-owned media duly reflect Indigenous cultural diversity. States, without prejudice to ensuring full freedom of expression, should encourage privately owned media to adequately reflect indigenous cultural diversity.”

Whereas the *Broadcasting Act, 1991*, recognized Aboriginal peoples and cultures as one of Canada’s minority groups, and did not support Indigenous languages specifically, the proposed *Act to Amend the Broadcasting Act* refers to Indigenous languages over a dozen times and requires Indigenous language content production

and distribution by Aboriginal and mainstream broadcasters.

The demand for Indigenous storytellers is increasing and the INCA program is expanding and evolving to meet the demand. The support we get from alumni, as mentors, trainers, and employers, is vital to the success of our students. The media projects we manage give our students opportunities to build their portfolios and their networks. COVID forced us to offer our courses remotely and we now have a role to build capacity in regional Indigenous media organizations.

Soon we will have a four-year degree program to add to our certificate and diploma programs. And we offer the only journalism and communication program in Canada that prepares Indigenous storytellers to work in media organizations, from tiny radio stations and community newspapers, to regional and national newspapers and television networks. ■

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Shannon Avison was raised in Whitehorse, Yukon before she moved to Saskatchewan to attend the University of Regina, and discovered the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College – now First Nations University of Canada. She completed the Indian Communication Arts (INCA) certificate program in 1988 and was hired as a Lecturer in the program in 1989. She completed a Bachelor of Arts (Indian Studies) in 1994 and a Master of Arts (Media Studies) at Concordia in 1997, and was promoted to Assistant Professor. Her research and teaching centers around Indigenous media. She has proposed and managed dozens of projects that employed her students and others, including *pikiskwêwin: Sharing Our Endangered Languages On Radio and Online* (funded by the Government of Canada).



# Twenty films that opened the eyes of Canada

Philip Lee

*Why is it important to have fair and balanced representations in film, TV, and popular media? Because otherwise they can have a negative impact on people's perceptions of others, especially women and minorities. Studies show that audiences substitute stereotypes they see on screen for reality when they have not had direct interaction with other peoples. Since media have the power to shape attitudes and behaviour, authentic representations can help break down barriers, open us up to new ideas, and even be a source of inspiration.*

In 2001, Jack G. Shaheen published *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People*. Based on a study of more than 900 films, it revealed how the distorted lenses of moviemakers depicted Arabs as heartless, brutal, uncivilized, and religious fanatics in stereotypical representations akin to the worst propaganda.

Shaheen's watchword was the Arab proverb *Al tikrar biallem il hmar* (By repetition even the donkey learns). In other words, how people are represented in the media – in this case in film – by degrees affects the perceptions and behaviour of others. This can be positive or negative. Conversely, when people are not represented in the media, they are silenced and their lives and cultures become invisible.

With regard to “others”, as noted by sociologist Elfriede Fürsich:

“Media imagery across various platforms, from

news journalism to fictional movies, has often portrayed minorities as different, exotic, special, essentialised or even abnormal. It is especially striking that the repertoire of representations of diverse minorities that contemporary media offer is often linked to historically established racist imaginaries such as in colonial literature and science (for example, slave imaginary or Orientalism). Moreover, as post-colonial, race, and gender studies have shown, the long history of visual mass media production that started with the invention of film more than 100 years ago has created a stockpile of mediated representation types that are constantly recycled in a variety of media outlets.”<sup>1</sup>

Fortunately, over the past three decades and especially in the case of Canada's First Nations, Indigenous directors have been able to make films offering alternative perspectives on the lives of their peoples. One of them – *Reel Injun* directed by Cree-Canadian Neil Diamond – followed in Shaheen's footsteps to produce a feature-length investigation of a century-plus of popular images of aboriginal North Americans.

## Reshaping collective memory

This article highlights 20 films and documentaries directed by Indigenous filmmakers that have helped to change how the public sees the lives and cultures of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Several appeared at a time when the findings of the country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) are still in the process of being addressed, including a call to reshape “a shared, national, collective memory”.<sup>2</sup>

In itself, this is also a response to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP, 2007), which underlined their right to “revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons” (Article 13).

How Indigenous peoples are represented



in the media – including film – directly impacts their acceptance as equal citizens in a multicultural environment.

**Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance (1993)**  
**directed by Alanis Obomsawin**

The Oka Crisis in July 1990 was a critical moment in Canadian history and a turning point for Indigenous affairs. That summer, a small Quebec community was thrust into the international spotlight when members of the Mohawk Nation blocked access to reserve lands that the predominantly white community of Oka wanted to develop into a golf course. This powerful documentary goes right to the heart of the action, painting a sensitive and deeply affecting portrait of the people behind the barricades. Winner of several awards from film festivals around the world, including the Toronto International Film Festival's Best Canadian Feature Film prize in 1993.

**Rocks at Whiskey Trench (2000) directed by Alanis Obomsawin**

On August 28, 1990, a convoy of 75 cars left the Mohawk community of Kahnawake and crossed Montreal's Mercier Bridge – straight into an angry mob of non-Indigenous people that pelted the vehicles with rocks. The targets of this violence were Mohawk women, children, and elders leaving their community, in fear of a possible advance by the Canadian army. This film is the fourth in Obomsawin's landmark series on the Mohawk rebellions. Nominated for the Genie Award for Best Documentary, *Rocks at Whiskey Trench* is shocking and essential viewing.

**Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner (2002) directed by Zacharias Kunuk**

Based on an ancient Inuit legend, *Atanarjuat* is an epic tale of love, betrayal and revenge. The beautiful Atuat has been promised to the short-fused Oki, the son of the tribe's leader. However, she loves the good-natured Atanarjuat, a fast runner and excellent hunter. When Atanarjuat is forced to battle the jealous Oki for Atuat's hand,



the events that follow determine not only his fate, but that of his people. *Atanarjuat* won 20 awards, including eight Genies and the Caméra d'Or at the 2001 Cannes Film Festival.

**Club Native (2008) directed by Tracey Deer**

On the Mohawk reserve of Kahnawake, outside Montreal, there are two unspoken rules: don't marry a white person, and don't have a child with one. The consequences of ignoring these rules can be dire – loss of membership on the reserve for yourself and your child. For those who incur them, the results can be devastating. In this honest and affecting documentary, filmmaker Tracey Deer follows the stories of four Kahnawake women whose lives have been affected by these rules, shedding light on contemporary Indigenous identity and asking questions about how we all understand who we are.

**Reel Injun (2009) directed by Neil Diamond**

*Reel Injun* is an enlightening documentary about the way Indigenous people have been depicted in film, from the silent era to the present day. Chock-full of clips from hundreds of films and packed with interviews with famous Indigenous



## Empire of Dirt (2013) directed by Peter Stebbings

CARA GEE   JENNIFER PODEMSKI   SHAY EYRE   LUKE KIRBY



# EMPIRE OF DIRT

DIRECTED BY PETER STEBBINGS

[illegible]




















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## Birth of a Family (2016) directed by Tasha Hubbard

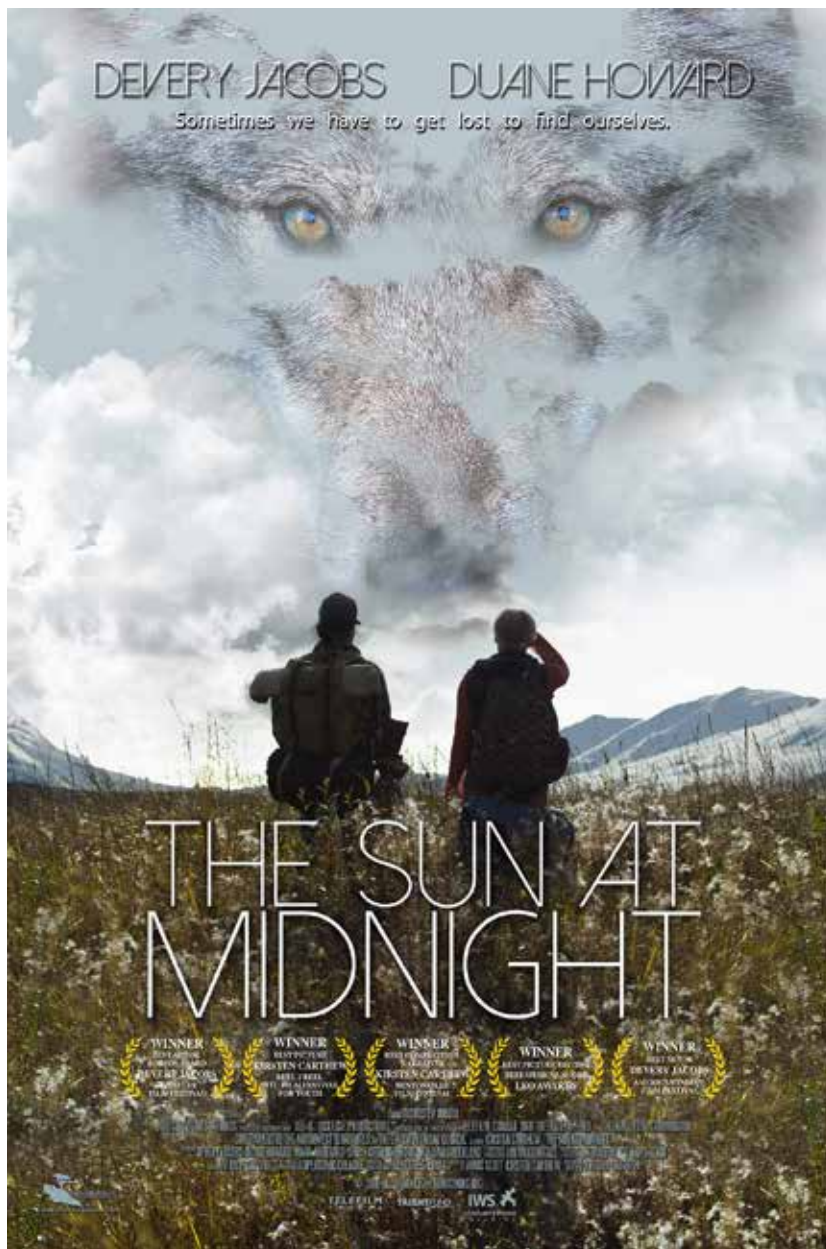
**Angry Inuk (2016) directed by Alethea Arnaquq-Baril**

## The Sun at Midnight (2016) directed by Kristen Carthew

Set in the stunning landscape of the Arctic Circle, this coming-of-age drama tells the story of an unexpected friendship between a hunter obsessed with finding a missing caribou herd and a teenage rebel who gets lost while on the run.

After her mother dies, 16-year-old “urban princess” Lia is sent to spend a summer with her Gwich’in grandmother in a small community in the far north. Desperate to get back to city life,





she steals a boat and heads south. As might be expected, she quickly gets lost, and is soon discovered by Alfred, a Gwich'in hunter, who reluctantly helps her navigate the unfamiliar wilderness.

### **Our People Will Be Healed (2017) directed by Alanis Obomsawin**

Alanis Obomsawin's 50th film reveals how a Cree community in Manitoba has been enriched through the power of education. The students at a local school for the Norway House Cree Nation discuss their aspirations for the future and reflect on how they are feeling more hopeful than previous generations.

By discussing the effects of intergenerational trauma, substance abuse and many other issues facing Indigenous communities, the students are able to undergo a process of collective healing that shows that the strength of the community comes from the people within it.

### **Rise (2017) directed by Michelle Latimer**

This powerful documentary series gives viewers a rare glimpse into the frontline of Indigenous-led resistance, examining Indigenous life through the stories of people in diverse communities who are working to protect their homelands.

*Sacred Water: Standing Rock Part 1:* The residents of the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation of South Dakota are fighting to stop a pipeline from being built on their ancestral homeland. In this absorbing account of the events leading up to the protests, Anishinaabe host Sarain Carson-Fox provides context and background, telling the water protectors' side of the story as the conflict develops right before our eyes.

*Red Power: Standing Rock Part 2:* As the #noDAPL movement grows in size and reaches boiling point, over 5,000 people descend on the Standing Rock camp. Using the unprecedented occupation at Standing Rock as its starting point, this episode delves into the evolution of the Red Power Movement, combining history lessons about Indigenous-led resistance with explosive footage of this historic moment.

*The Urban Rez:* Winnipeg, MB, is home to Canada's largest Indigenous population – over 90,000 people. In this powerful and inspiring episode, several grassroots organizations and collectives take back the streets, battling the intergenerational effect of Canada's Residential School System, poverty, high crime, and violence against Indigenous women and girls.

### **Angelique's Isle (2018) directed by Marie-Hélène Cousineau and Michelle Derosier**

In the midst of the 1845 mining boom on the shores of Lake Superior, newly-wed Anishinaabe woman Angelique agrees to accompany her voyager husband, on a copper expedition. Left by the rest of the crew to guard a large discovery on a remote island, the couple must survive for weeks dealing with the harsh winter conditions and dwindling food supply. As hunger sets in, Angelique – a devout Christian – struggles with her faith and must rely on the teachings she received from her grandmother in order to survive.





*Still from “The Grizzlies” (see below). The film premiered at the 2018 Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF). Later that year, Miranda de Pencier, won the Directors’ Guild of Canada award for Best Direction in a Feature Film.*

Based on the true story of 17-year-old Angelique Mott, the film is a harrowing tale of perseverance and survival.

### **The Messenger (2019) directed by Alanis Obomsawin**

This film follows the fight between provincial and federal governments over who would pay for the care of Jordan River Anderson, a young Cree boy with a rare genetic condition. The battle that took place resulted in the New Jordan Principle, which ensured equitable access for children in Canada; specifically, that First Nations and Inuit Children would receive the same standard of social, health, and educational services as are offered to the rest of the population in Canada.

### **Nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up (2019) directed by Tasha Hubbard**

On August 9, 2016, a 22 year old Cree man named Colten Boushie was killed by a gunshot to the back of his head after entering a rural farm property in Saskatchewan with his friends. When an all-white jury acquitted the white farmer of all charges, the case received international attention and sent Colten’s family and community on a quest to fix the Canadian justice system. *Nîpawistamâsowin* was the opening night film at

Toronto’s Hot Docs 2019, where it won the prize for Best Canadian Documentary.

### **Red Snow (2019) directed by Marie Clements**

Dylan, a Gwich’in soldier from the Canadian Arctic, is on a military tour in Afghanistan when he is ambushed and captured by Taliban rebels. As he is held prisoner and interrogated, he is reminded of painful memories connected to the love and death of his Inuk cousin, Asana. What begins as a fight for survival becomes a terrifying race against time as Dylan is forced into a situation no soldier ever wants to face. Marie Clements’ second feature premiered at the imagineNATIVE festival in 2019 and collected a number of accolades.

### **The Grizzlies (2019) directed by Miranda de Pencier**

When Russ Sheppard moves north to teach in a town struggling with a high suicide rate, he is shocked by the challenges facing the town’s youth – a result of the legacy of colonization. Russ introduces a lacrosse program in the school through which young people find a vital outlet for their emotions, and a sense of pride and purpose in themselves and their community. The film won four awards at film festivals internationally.



### **Rustic Oracle (2019) directed by Sonia Bo-spille Boileau**

A moving portrait of a family in crisis, *Rustic Oracle* tells the story of eight-year-old Ivy, who joins her mother Susan in a desperate race against time to search for her older sister who's gone missing from their Mohawk community. While their journey to find answers is one that no family should go through, their shared hope helps mother and daughter come together in love in difficult circumstances. With the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women continuing to make headlines as a national tragedy, filmmaker Sonia Boileau tells a story that is personal, intimate and humane.

### **The Incredible 25th Year of Mitzi Bearclaw (2019) directed by Shelley Niro**

When Mitzi Bearclaw turns 25, it's time to start making big decisions for the future. Her dream to design cool hats is put on hold when she chooses to move from the city back to her isolated reserve to look after her sick mother. With the reserve bully constantly at her heels and an old flame suddenly back in her life, she is grateful that her cousin is there to help her in the fight to stay positive under trying circumstances. With a lot of laughs along the way, Mitzi embarks on a quest to get her family back on the right track.

### **One Day in the Life of Noah Piugattuk (2019) directed by Zacharias Kunuk**

Spring 1961, Noah Piugattuk's nomadic Inuit band live and hunt by dog team, just as their ancestors did. When a government emissary arrives in camp, he asks them to relocate their families to permanent settlements and send their children to school. Behind what seems to the hunters to be the government agent's incoherent requests is a policy that will mean a fundamental rupture in the lives of Inuit.

### **The Body Remembers When the World Broke Open (2020) directed by Elle-Máíja Tailfeathers and Kathleen Hepburn**

Set in Vancouver, BC, this film explores the com-



plex themes of racialization, gender, and colonisation through the bonds that two women form with one another. In a chance encounter in the street, Áila finds Rosie, heavily pregnant and barefoot, and takes her home in order to escape Rosie's violent boyfriend who has assaulted her. As the two women explore and unpack the traumatic event that Rosie survived, their relationship becomes one of deep connection and safety in a world that has harmed them. ■

*With acknowledgement to material provided by Reel Canada, a charitable organization that celebrates Canada through film.*

#### **Notes**

1. Fürsich, Elfriede. (2010). "Media and the representation of Others." *International Social Science Journal*, March 2010. 61. 113-130.
2. [Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future](#). Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015, p. 268).

Philip Lee is General Secretary of the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) and Editor of its journal Media Development. His publications include *Many Voices, One Vision: The Right to Communicate in Practice* (ed.) (2004); *Public Memory, Public Media, and the Politics of Justice* (ed. with Pradip N. Thomas) (2012); and *Expanding Shrinking Communication Spaces* (ed. with Lorenzo Vargas) (2020).



# Making a Decade of Action for Indigenous Languages

## UNESCO

*The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the period between 2022 and 2032 as the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (IDIL 2022–2032), to draw global attention to the critical situation of many indigenous languages.*

The proclamation of an International Decade was a key outcome of the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages, for which the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) led global efforts. The Organization continues to serve as lead UN Agency for the implementation of the International Decade, in cooperation with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and other relevant UN Agencies.

The International Decade aims at ensuring indigenous peoples' right to preserve, revitalize and promote their languages, and mainstreaming linguistic diversity and multilingualism aspects into the sustainable development efforts. It offers a unique opportunity to collaborate in the areas of policy development and stimulate a global dialogue in a true spirit of multi-stakeholder engagement, and to take necessary for the usage, preservation, revitalization, and promotion of indigenous languages around the world.

On the closing of the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages, 27–28 February 2020, Mexico City, and as the outcome document of the High-level event “Making a Decade of Action for Indigenous Languages”, UNESCO

adopted the “Los Pinos Declaration [Chapoltepek]”.

The Declaration's plan of action rests on five key principles, based on human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the rights and values of indigenous peoples as indicated in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), as inspiration for the future Global Action Plan for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages.

1. *Centrality of indigenous peoples* – “Nothing for us without us”, according to the principle of self-determination; the right to use, develop, revitalize, and transmit languages orally and in written forms to future generations which reflect the insights and values of indigenous peoples, their identities and traditional knowledge systems and cultures; the equal treatment of indigenous languages with respect to other languages; and the effective and inclusive participation of indigenous peoples in consultation, planning and implementation of processes based on their free, prior and informed consent right from the start of any development initiative as well as the recognition of the specific barriers and challenges faced by indigenous women, whose identity, cultural traditions and forms of social organization enhance and strengthen the communities in which they live.

2. *Compliance with international norms and standards*, in particular taking into consideration the provisions of the UNDRIP which constitute the necessary standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of indigenous peoples, as well as for the promotion of linguistic diversity and multilingualism based on mutual respect, coexistence and shared benefit.

3. *Joint action, “Delivering as One”, for efficient and coherent delivery across the UN system*: UN System-wide action plan (SWAP), in partnership with the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the



Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP), as well as the integration of UN normative and operational mandates on the rights of indigenous peoples working in collaboration with UN Country Teams (UNCT); as well as building synergy among different international and regional frameworks on indigenous peoples' rights and sustainable development, reconciliation and peacebuilding, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the African Union Agenda 2063 and other relevant instruments.

4. *Multi-stakeholder partnerships at all levels* in order to foster synergies, leadership, adequate responses with the enhanced participation of indigenous peoples and other stakeholders, and the establishment of collaborative structures at local, national, regional and international levels.

5. *A holistic approach in programming* based upon a full spectrum of human rights and fundamental freedoms, embracing indigenous identity, cultural and spiritual diversity, gender equality, and including indigenous persons with disabilities, and multicultural societies, as well as building inclusive and equitable education and learning environments, and developing a paradigm that encourages capacity-building and empowerment of indigenous peoples to ensure environmental sustainability, biodiversity and cultural diversity, as well as allowing them to benefit from technological and scientific developments. ■

Source: UNESCO.

## De los derechos públicos a los privilegios privados

Leonardo D. Félix

*Uno de los temas más recurrentes en Argentina en los últimos 20 años, en el área de comunicación en tanto servicio y derecho humano básico, está relacionado con la larga y valiosa construcción y lucha colectiva de más de 400 organizaciones (de la Sociedad Civil y Basadas en la Fe, entre ellas la WACC Global), para dejar sin uso la antigua “Ley de Radiodifusión” – que viene de los tiempos de la última dictadura cívico militar (1976–1983) y aprobar finalmente en las cámaras del Senado y Diputados una nueva ley de “Servicios de comunicación audiovisual” (ley 26.522)<sup>1</sup> sancionada y promulgada en octubre de 2009.*

Para poder entender cómo funcionan las cosas no solo en Argentina, sino también en gran parte de América Latina y Caribe, cada ley promulgada encuentra trabas inmediatas a su implementación, trabas que se generarán en la mayoría de los casos, desde los grupos concentradores económicos de producción y, en este caso, en los productores de medios como grandes grupos corporativos que defenderán sus propios intereses en todos los casos indistintamente de qué color partidario gobierno.

En este sentido, una de las primeras trabas (como medida cautelar judicial) es dada por el grupo Clarín – uno de los mayores concentradores de medios en toda la Argentina. Según la Ley de Servicios de Comunicación Audiovisual





—paralizada por varios años ningún grupo puede poseer más de diez licencias de radio y televisión abierta. Clarín tiene 12.<sup>2</sup>

Con esto se busca hacer más plural el ejercicio democrático de informar a la opinión pública aunque por supuesto, el argumento desde el lado de Clarín, es que el gobierno busca debilitarlo a través de esta norma, para dominarlo y reducir su poder de crítica. Junto con esto se plantea la sustentabilidad del grupo corporativo a lo cual, la señal inmediata del entonces gobierno de Cristina F. de Kirchner fue que no se puede equiparar sustentabilidad con mayor capacidad de rentabilidad.

Si bien la historia, como podrán imaginarse es larga desde el 2009 a la fecha, con idas y

venidas con un poder supuestamente autónomo como es el judicial, el 2020 y 2021 con pandemia encima hace que el gobierno actual de Alberto Fernández y Cristina Kirchner (también peronista como lo era en 2009) luego de un intervalo de cuatro años de Mauricio Macri (2015-2019), tome como medida el DNU 690/2020<sup>3</sup> (Decreto de Necesidad y Urgencia) que declara “*servicios públicos esenciales y estratégicos en competencia*” a la telefonía celular y fija, internet y televisión paga.

Esto inevitablemente tendrá otra traba de los grupos concentradores de telefonías como Telecom<sup>4</sup> que presentara en abril de 2021<sup>5</sup> aduciendo que el decreto afecta derechos constitucionales que sopesan la libertad de fijar tarifas en beneficio de sus intereses, por sobre la posibilidad o no de la población de acceder a los mismos en tiempos pandémicos (marcados por el fuerte encierro y la inminente y casi prioritaria necesidad de millones de usuarios de contar con internet o servicios similares para seguir en modalidad de teletrabajo sus empleos o bien, estar en conexión con sus familias).

Y es importante citar otro elemento que hace al contexto cada vez más complejo de la comunicación y su regulación en Argentina, y de la pugna de las grandes corporaciones mediáticas con gobiernos de corte popular como lo es el de Alberto Fernández. Una de las medidas fuertes en materia de comunicación fue la sancionada en la segunda presidencia de Cristina F. de Kirchner denominada *Ley de Argentina Digital*<sup>6</sup> en donde el artículo 15, derogado por la presidencia de M. Macri, implicaba básicamente que los servicios de comunicación y de telecomunicaciones son esenciales, públicos en competencia, quiere decir que están en libre mercado, que las empresas tienen la potestad de definir sus estrategias comerciales, establecer los precios pero va a ser el Estado mediante un ente regulador (ENACOM)<sup>7</sup> quien vuelve a tener potestad de sentarse con las empresas y ponerle tope a los aumentos de cada sector.<sup>8</sup>

Quizás esta breve descripción de un problema tan largo en el tiempo pueda y deba tener múltiples lecturas (similares o



contrapuestas), algunas obvias y otras no tanto que hay que desentrañar, como por ejemplo:

- \* Existe una marcada necesidad del sector privado de no verse intervenido por el Estado en ninguna de sus facetas que contemplen ganancias o nuevos mercados.
- \* Existe una necesidad siempre presente de los gobiernos de corte popular en poder marcar límites al crecimiento cuasi monopólicos de los sectores concentradores de medios.
- \* Hay reclamos históricos de las organizaciones vinculadas a la comunicación independiente que quieren en todo momento, igualdad de condiciones para entrar a competir en el mercado planteado.
- \* Se nota cada vez con más fuerza la pluralidad y diversidad de voces existentes, la falta de homogeneidad en los discursos y prácticas de la cultura actual y es importante que la comunicación responda a esa pluralidad.
- \* La presencia de distintas espiritualidades en el amplio abanico social es cada vez más fuerte con voces que llevan mensajes de aperturas, democratización de los espacios comunicacionales y respeto a la diversidad religiosa y cultural.

Y así podríamos seguir enumerando posibles lecturas de esto que va sucediendo en la comunicación dentro de Argentina que, a pesar de todas las trabas, ha tenido avances importantes en este punto, pudiendo citar por ejemplo la creación de la Defensoría del Público que cuida justamente, a las audiencias.<sup>9</sup>

Lo que es importante preguntarnos como parte necesario del análisis de las idas y venidas en el país, así como en gran parte de la región donde hechos similares se repiten, y el poder judicial entra en clara competencia con el ejecutivo y legislativo defendiendo por momentos intereses corporativos es, *¿si acaso, esta defensa exacerbada de la libertad de expresión, de conciencia y de religión no son solo instrumentalizadas en función de negar derechos a amplias mayorías que vienen reclamando su espacio de participación en la sociedad desde hace décadas?*

Presumimos e intuimos que en gran medida,

instrumentalizar estos discursos en favor de que grandes mayorías no accedan a sus derechos, es un modo recurrente que han encontrado los sectores fundamentalistas (no solo religiosos, sino políticos y económicos) de operar en el mundo garantizando así, el mantenimiento del status quo obtenido. ■

#### Notas

1. <http://servicios.infoleg.gob.ar/infolegInternet/anexos/155000-159999/158649/norma.htm>
2. [https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias/2013/10/131029\\_argentina\\_clarin\\_ley\\_medios\\_consecuencias\\_irm](https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias/2013/10/131029_argentina_clarin_ley_medios_consecuencias_irm)
3. <https://www.boletinoficial.gob.ar/detalleAviso/primera/233932/20200822>
4. <https://www.estudio-ofarrell.com/la-camara-contencioso-administrativo-federal-suspendio-los-efectos-del-decreto-de-necesidad-y-urgencia-n-690/>
5. La Cámara Contencioso Administrativo Federal hizo lugar a la medida cautelar solicitada por Telecom Argentina S.A. (en adelante “Telecom”) en los autos “TELECOM ARGENTINA S.A. c/ EN-ENACOM Y OTRO s/ MEDIDA CAUTELAR (AUTÓNOMA)” (Expte N° 12881/2020), y dispuso la suspensión de los efectos de los artículos 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 y 6 del Decreto de Necesidad y Urgencia N° 690/2020 (en adelante “DNU 690/20”) y de las Resoluciones ENACOM N° 1466/2020, 1467/2020 y 204/2021 (en adelante “Resolución 1466/20, 1467/20 y 204/21”, respectivamente), respecto de Telecom. Telecom había iniciado acción judicial contra el Poder Ejecutivo Nacional y el Ente Nacional de Comunicaciones (en adelante “ENACOM”), solicitando que se dispusiera cautelarmente la suspensión del DNU 690/20, y de las Resoluciones ENACOM 1466/20 y 1467/20, fundando su petición en la nulidad absoluta de las disposiciones citadas, por considerar que vulneraban los artículos 14, 17, 19, 28, 31, 32, 33, 42, 75 inciso 22, 76 y 99, inciso 3 de la Constitución Nacional, y el artículo 30 de la Convención Americana de Derechos Humanos.
6. <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/normativa/nacional/resoluci%C3%B3n-205-2021-347338/texto>
7. [https://www.enacom.gob.ar/que-es-enacom\\_p33](https://www.enacom.gob.ar/que-es-enacom_p33)
8. <https://www.pagina12.com.ar/286831-el-dnu-que-declara-servicios-esenciales-a-tv-internet-y-celu>
9. <https://defensadelpublico.gob.ar/>

Leonardo D. Félix es presidente de la WACC en América Latina.



### Mannheim-Heidelberg (Germany) 2021

At the 70th International Film Festival Mannheim-Heidelberg (November 11-21, 2021), the Ecumenical Jury, appointed by INTERFILM and SIGNIS, awarded its Prize of EUR 2.500 donated by the German Bishops' Conference (DBK) and the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), to the film *Ma nuit* (My Night) directed by Antoinette Boulat (France, Belgium, 2021).

*Motivation:* The affirmation of one's own life begins with saying no to the most diverse offers of externally determined life. The path that the protagonist Marion takes on the birthday of her sister Alice, who died five years ago, leads right into the dark. It is the darkness of her own grief that challenges her to take a different look at life, a look that does not allow itself any distraction from the seductive illusions of, for example, a casting offer or her peer group.

The breakthrough to a new beginning, however, also requires a leap of faith - in this case towards a coincidental companion who shows himself to be a soulmate. At the same time, this means allowing closeness and taking the risk of life.

All of this breaks through in a leap into the Seine, which seems like an intimate baptismal experience that allows lightness and makes room for new beginnings. From the acceptance of one's own vulnerability, she finally reaches for the blue of the sky, thus transcending the boundaries of transience and overcoming grief.

Antoinette Boulat has succeeded in creating a magical cinematic moment with *My Night*, magnificently performed by an outstanding Lou Lampros.

The members of the 2021 Jury: Michael Kranzusch, Jury President, Germany; Uta Losem, Germany; Lothar Strüber, Germany

### Saarbruecken (Germany) 2022

At the 43rd Film Festival Max Ophuels Prize Saarbruecken January 16-26, 2022 the Prize of the Ecumenical Jury, endowed with € 2500 by the Katholische Erwachsenenbildung Saarland-Landesarbeitsgemeinschaft e.V. and the Landesarbeitsgemeinschaft für Evangelische Erwachsenenbildung im Saarland e.V., represented by the Evangelische Akademie im Saarland., was awarded to *Moneyboys* directed by C. B. Yi (Austria, France, Belgium, Taiwan, 2022).

*Motivation:* The film is captivating with its chronological narrative and dramatisation of the contrasts between a traditional "rural idyll" and an anonymous big city. The rhythm and bustle of the city is counteracted by the supposedly quiet and harmonious home village. The longing for the comfort and safety the protagonist feels amongst his family, ends in a violent reproach of blame that forces him to go back to the anonymity of the city. The deliberate use of colour, music and visual aesthetics powerfully underlines the dynamics behind using your own body to make money fast whilst on a precarious path to the Chinese upper class.

Members of the 2022 Jury: Tom Damm, Germany; Sabrina Maas, Germany; Alexandra Palkowitsch, Austria; Wolf-Dieter Scheid, Germany.

### Berlin (Germany) 2022

At the 72nd International Film Festival Berlin held February 10-20, 2022, the Ecumenical Jury, appointed by INTERFILM and SIGNIS, awarded its Prize in the International Competition to *Un año, una noche* (One Year, One Night) directed by Isaki Lacuesta (Spain, France, 2021).

*Motivation:* The film broaches the issue of the psychological and social effects of the terror-





ist attack against the discotheque Bataclan/Paris 2015. In its balance between the way of representing human destiny and outstanding artistic intensity in all dimensions of film language and acting, the film represents the long grief process of a young couple, Celine and Ramon, after the attack.

The struggle of the main character dealing with Death (“He is not the God of the dead, but of the living”, Mark 12,27) is so intimate and intense that months are needed to accept the reality. From the beginning, Violence is not responded to by hate but by love (Matthew 5,44f). After months of loneliness, relations full of life are again possible.

In the Panorama, the Jury awarded its Prize, endowed with € 2.500 by the Catholic German Bishops’ Conference, to *Klondike* directed by Maryna Er Gorbach (Ukraine, Turkey, 2022).

*Motivation:* The film is set during 2014 at the Russian-Ukrainian border. The film begins when a bomb hits the wall of Irka’s and Tolik’s

house. The destroyed wall opens the view onto the surrounding landscape. The village becomes a theatre of war, and Irka and Tolik become witnesses of the passenger plane MH17 that was shot down. The Russian-Ukrainian conflict runs through the family since Irka’s brother suspects Tolik of being a Russian separatist. The pregnant Irka refuses to flee while Tolik does everything to protect his wife and the unborn child.

*Klondike* shows impressively how private happiness is pulled out of joint through war and violence. The film’s staging is outstanding: It concentrates entirely on the characters whose room to manoeuvre is more and more minimized by the conflict. The characters act like on a stage. Thereby the film directs our gaze to the existential question of what is more important: to bring yourself to safety or to hold on to your home, and where you find the prospect of a new life.

In the Forum, the Jury awarded its Prize, endowed with € 2.500 by the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), to *Geographies of Solitude* directed by Jacquelyn Mills (Canada, 2022) for documenting the work of Zoe Lucas, who committed her life to collecting and archiving flora and fauna on Sable Island, a tiny place far off the coast of Nova Scotia.

With remarkable filmic means, immersing into the fibre of biological existence, creating images and sound of tremendous beauty, Mills shows nature on this secluded island as a space of great quiet and of the continuous recreation of life. The discovery that Lucas documents the large amounts of plastic waste in the North Atlantic comes as a shock to the filmmaker and the audience, thus also raising awareness of this dramatic ecological problem.

The members of the 2022 Jury were: International Competition: Magali van Reeth (France), Hans-Martin Gutmann (Germany), Timea Kókai-Nagy (Hungary); Panorama: Margrit Frölich (Germany), Roland Kauffmann (France), Martin Ostermann (Germany); Forum: Adriana Răcășan (Romania), Markus Leniger (Germany), Roland Wicher (Germany). ■