

The Glendon Truth and Reconciliation Declaration on Indigenous Language Policy

Background

On February 9, 2016, eighty-two Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars gathered together at Glendon College, York University, for a national Colloquium on the implications for Indigenous language policy of the TRC Report of December, 2015. The principal Glendon sponsors were the School of Public and International Affairs (PIA) and the Centre for Research in Language and Culture Contact (CRLCC).

The gathering was opened by former National Chief Phil Fontaine and was attended by invited speakers, indigenous language policy researchers and practitioners from five provinces and one territory, federal and Ontario government officials, and media observers.

The aim of the Colloquium was to address the implications for Indigenous Language Policy in Canada of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada, and for the Related Responsibilities of Post-secondary Educational Institutions. In both the morning plenary and in afternoon working groups, the participants addressed the following three Calls to Action of the TRC Final Report and the fourth topic, the related responsibilities of post-secondary institutions.

The three TRC Calls to Action discussed at the Colloquium were:

Call to Action # 13

We call upon the federal government to acknowledge that Aboriginal rights include Aboriginal language rights.

Call to Action #14

We call upon the federal government to enact an Aboriginal Languages Act.

Call to Action #15

We call upon the federal government to appoint, in consultation with Aboriginal groups, an Aboriginal Languages Commissioner

The Declaration itself is a one-page document, attached here. There is also a long version¹, which includes some forty pages of discussion, presented as Call-specific appendices. This material was drawn from the Colloquium transcripts, as well as subsequent comments by participants and bibliographic sources. Key developments which occurred after the Colloquium have been incorporated in the appendices.

The Drafting Committee of the Declaration is: **Maya Chacaby** (Anishinaabe scholar and Anishinaabemowin Instructor, Glendon); **Amos Key, Jr.** (Haudenosaunee scholar and faculty member, Indigenous Studies, University of Toronto) and **Ian Martin** (English Department and PIA, Glendon.)

We invite endorsements from all concerned individuals and groups, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, and members, departments, and faculties of post-secondary institutions.

The Declaration will be formally launched on November 18, 2016 at the International Conference on Languages and Cultures in Contact, sponsored by the Centre for Research on Language and Culture Contact, to be held at Glendon College.

¹ Available upon request from imartin@glendon.yorku.ca. Endorsements can be sent to this address.

The Glendon Truth and Reconciliation Declaration on Indigenous Language Policy:

We declare that, to truly celebrate the 150th anniversary of Canada in 2017,

1. The Crown and Her Federal Government must formally acknowledge, without the need for litigation, that section 35(1) of the *Constitution Act, 1982* includes Indigenous² Linguistic Rights.
2. The Crown and Her Federal government must enact an Indigenous Languages Act. In doing so, it can be guided by the Report of the 2005 Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures, which responds to each of the five principles required by the TRC Report.
3. The Crown and Her Federal Government in enacting an Indigenous Language Act must create an Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages, with three national Indigenous Language Commissioners, one for the First Nations, one for the Inuit, and one for the Metis, with an ancillary staff complement comparable to that of the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, and a Commissioner's representative located in each Indigenous Nation and/or Territory to assist with the carrying out of the intent of the Indigenous Language Act.
4. All of the above recommendations are subject to consultation with the three Aboriginal groups, First Nations, Inuit and Metis as identified in the Constitution Act, 1982, in a manner which respects the principle of free, prior and informed consent.

With respect to the Related Responsibilities of Post-Secondary Institutions, we further declare that:

1. Post-secondary Institutions must develop collaborative funding models to support Indigenous language initiatives open to research, pedagogy, and partnerships
2. TRC Committees must be established in all post-secondary institutions
3. Post-secondary institutions must engage in Community building: both inside the university and between the institution and Indigenous communities and Indigenous community-based organizations
4. Varying qualifications and credentials of Indigenous people must be recognized and honoured
5. There must be cross-training and collaboration across university administrations, programs and faculty
6. Post-secondary institutions must develop programs in Indigenous language studies with a view to promoting full oral proficiency and literacy in Indigenous languages, with certification through college and university diplomas and degrees in Indigenous languages
7. There must be Indigenous Cultural Competency Training for all post-secondary institutions which would include Governors/Regents, Administration, Faculty and Staff.

² At the time of the drawing up of the Canadian constitution 1982 and of the TRC report, the general term used was 'Aboriginal'; however, in keeping with current shifts in terminology, this text uses the term 'Indigenous', the exception being the term 'Aboriginal rights.' Otherwise, the term 'Indigenous' refers to those peoples as affirmed as 'Aboriginal' in the Constitution: First Nations, Metis and Inuit, and is inclusive of both on- and off-reserve communities as well as status and non-status.