

### Examples for UNDRIP Articles

“One of my favourite things about my culture is how we’re taught that everything on the Earth is to be respected. It’s an important part of the culture and covers everything. That includes respecting yourself. Respecting yourself is one of the most important things my culture has taught me. Also, the land, water, plants, air and animals are all very important to our culture and need to be respected. Without any of it, what would we be?”

-Kateri, a Mohawk youth from a community in Quebec

Terra Nullius (TER-ah NOO-lee-us)

The idea of Terra Nullius, which in Latin means “land belonging to no-one”, meant European countries could send out explorers and when they found land, they could claim it for their nation. These were often lands we were using.

Indian Act

In 1876 all the laws dealing with us were gathered together and put into the Indian Act. The Indian Act completely changed our lives. As long as our cultures were strong it was difficult for the government to take our lands so the government used the Indian Act to attack who we were as peoples. Hunting and fishing were now limited and our spiritual ceremonies like the potlatch, powwow and sundance were now against the law. This didn’t change until the 1950’s.”

Residential Schools

From the mid-1800’s until the 1990’s, the federal government took First Nations, Inuit, and Metis children from our homes and communities and put them in boarding schools that were run by churches. The official partnership between the federal government and the churches ended in the 1970’s but some churches continued to operate schools until the 1990’s. We didn’t have a choice about this. Sometimes the police arrived to take our children away. These schools were often very far from our homes and our kids had to stay at them all or most of the year. Mostly they were not allowed to speak our languages and were punished if they did. Often they weren’t given enough food. The last Indian residential school closed in 1996.

We have language immersion programs and healing initiatives based on our traditional values. Our elders are passing on land-based skills to our youth and mothers and grandmothers are working to address violence in our nations by reinstating ceremonies that honour women. Our leaders are using courts to have our rights recognized and many of our

nations are growing. We see treaties as living agreements that, if respected, will allow people from all backgrounds to share the land peacefully and respectfully. We are strong and resilient having survived centuries of efforts to make us disappear.

Shannen Koostachin of Attawapiskat First Nation has a dream: safe and comfy schools for First Nations children and youth, and classes that respect First Nations cultures. She worked tirelessly to try to convince the federal government to give First Nations children a proper education and fair funding.

Shannen said, “I want to tell you what it is like to never have the chance to feel excited about being educated.... It’s hard to feel pride when our classrooms are cold, and the mice run over our lunches and when you don’t have proper resources like libraries and science labs. You know that kids in other communities have proper schools. So you begin to feel as if you are a child who doesn’t count for anything... We want our younger brothers and sisters to go to school thinking that school is a time for hopes and dreams of the future. Every kid deserves this.”

Examples taken from KAIROS Blanket Exercise

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