

these can be seen as positive, not negative, activities. For the most part, the school staff members were not responsible for the policies that separated children from their parents and lodged them in inadequate and underfunded facilities. In fact, many staff members spent much of their time and energy attempting to humanize a harsh and often destructive system. Along with the children's own resilience, such staff members share credit for any positive results of the schools.

## Agreement and apologies

During the years in which the federal government was slowly closing the residential school system, Aboriginal people across the country were establishing effective regional and national organizations. In the courts and the legislatures, they argued for the recognition of Aboriginal rights, particularly the right to self-government. They forced the government to withdraw its 1969 White Paper that aimed at terminating Aboriginal rights, they placed the settling of land claims on the national agenda, ensured that Aboriginal rights were entrenched in the Constitution, and saw the creation of a new jurisdiction within Canada—the territory of Nunavut—with an Inuit majority population. These developments were part of a global movement asserting the rights of Indigenous peoples. Canadian Aboriginal leaders played a key role in this movement. For example, they were central in the creation of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples in 1975.<sup>656</sup> The work of the council laid the groundwork for the 2007 *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.<sup>657</sup>

From the 1960s onwards, many people within the churches began to re-evaluate both the broader history of the relations between the churches and Aboriginal peoples, and the specific history of the residential schools. Many church organizations provided support to Aboriginal campaigns on such issues as land and Treaty rights. In the 1980s, the churches began to issue apologies to Aboriginal people. One of the first of these, issued in 1986 by the United Church of Canada, focused on the destructive impact that church missionary work had on Aboriginal culture.<sup>658</sup> The Oblate order offered an apology in 1991 that referred to the residential schools.<sup>659</sup> Apologies relating specifically to their roles in operating residential schools were issued by the Anglicans in 1993, the Presbyterians in 1994, and the United Church in 1998.<sup>660</sup>

Aboriginal people also began both individually and collectively to push for the prosecution of individuals who had abused students at residential schools and for compensation for former students. In 1987, Nora Bernard, a former student of the Shubenacadie residential school, began interviewing fellow Survivors in the kitchen of her home in Truro, Nova Scotia.<sup>661</sup> In 1995, she formed the Shubenacadie Indian Residential School Survivors Association and started registering Survivors. The work of former students from the schools in places as distant as Fort Albany, Ontario; Chesterfield Inlet, then