

Aboriginal languages. Article 8:1 of the *Declaration* recognizes that “Indigenous peoples and individuals have the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture.” Article 8:2 provides that “states shall provide effective mechanisms for prevention of and redress for any form of forced assimilation or integration.”

The *Declaration* also includes specific recognition of the right to revitalize and transmit Aboriginal languages in Article 13:1, which recognizes that “Indigenous peoples have the 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 14 provides for educational language rights of the type that Canadians already know and experience, with respect to anglophone and francophone minorities. Article 14:1 provides similarly that “Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning,” and Article 14:3 provides: “States shall, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, take effective measures, in order for indigenous individuals, particularly children, including those living outside their communities, to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language.” Article 16 provides 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 that states “shall take effective measures to ensure that State-owned media duly reflect indigenous cultural diversity.”⁸²

The attempt to assimilate students by denying them access to, and respect for, their Aboriginal language and culture often meant that the students became estranged from their families and communities. Agnes Mills, a former student at All Saints residential school in Saskatchewan, told the Commission her story.

And one of the things that residential school did for me, I really regret, is that it made me ashamed of who I was.... And I wanted to be white so bad, and the worst thing I ever did was I was ashamed of my mother, that honourable woman, because she couldn't speak English. She never went to school, and they told us that, we used to go home to her on Saturdays, and they told us that we couldn't talk Gwich'in to her and, and she couldn't, like couldn't communicate. And my sister was the one that had the nerve to tell her, “We can't talk Loucheux to you, they told us not to.”⁸³

Mary Courchene, formerly a student at the residential schools at Fort Alexander in Manitoba and Lebret in Saskatchewan, had a similar interaction with her family.

And I looked at my dad, I looked at my mom, I looked at my dad again. You know what? I hated them. I just absolutely hated my own parents. Not because I thought they abandoned me; I hated their brown faces. I hated them because they were Indians.... So I, I looked at my dad and I challenged him and I said, “From now on we speak only English in this house,” I said to my dad. And you know when we, when, in a traditional home where I was raised, the first thing that we all were always taught