

BLANKET EXERCISE

AN EXERCISE IN BUILDING AWARENESS
ABOUT COLONIAL HISTORY
AND THE PRESENT REALITY OF
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES



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Blanket exercise --
an exercise in awareness-building about colonial history
and the present reality of Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island

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Contents

Logistics	3
What You Need	4
Time required	5
The Number of Participants	5
Support during and after the exercise	5
Participants.....	6
Text for the Blanket Exercise	7
Listen to Indigenous Voices	7
Setting	7
Recognition of the rights of Indigenous peoples	9
Annexation of Indigenous territories that had been recognized	12
The Building of Canada to the Detriment of Indigenous Peoples	14
The Appropriation of the North in Quebec	19
Current struggles.....	20
Conclusion	24

Blanket Exercise, An activity to build collective awareness

The Blanket Exercise was created by Kairos Canada in 1997 and has been used throughout the country. This particular version was conceived by the *Réseau Œcuménique Justice, Écologie et Paix* (ROJEP). While it retains the structure and certain elements of the Kairos version, it constitutes a specifically Quebec edition of this exercise.¹ Our objective is to increase the awareness of groups of citizens regarding the history of dispossession experienced by the Indigenous peoples of Quebec and Canada as well as the consequences of that dispossession today. By taking a moment to enter the world of an Indigenous person, will we perhaps be able to feel what it is like to be Indigenous today? Perhaps we can have a conversation about Indigenous peoples from a renewed perspective?

Logistics

Before the activity begins, blankets should be spread out on the floor. They represent North America before the arrival of the Europeans. The participants represent Indigenous peoples. They move about freely on the blankets as if they were using and occupying these lands. A narrator reads a text while other persons, playing the role of a European, of a Canadian or a Québécois, join the group and dialogue with those walking about on the blankets.

While the history of the relationship between Europeans and the Indigenous peoples of Canada and Quebec is being read, certain participants are invited to read out scrolls prepared in advance and distributed before the exercise begins. At the end of the exercise, only a few people remain on the blankets, which progressively have been folded and grouped so as to cover only a fraction of their original area. The exercise ends with an invitation to all present to consider the difference between the situation at the beginning and at the end.

¹ The Blanket Exercise. Welcome to the KAIROS Blanket Exercise Resource Centre: <http://kairosblanketexercise.org/about/> (consulted on 2015-11-26).

What You Need

- **Blankets:** The blankets are placed on the floor in such a way that they touch each other and form a large enough space to accommodate all the participants. You should have one blanket for each group of 3 or 4 participants. Two blankets are set aside: one will be used to represent the transmission of smallpox; another will be used to represent a residential school. You may also use sheets or decorated fabric. Sometimes people bring blankets from their homes. This can accentuate the emotional impact when the blankets are removed during the course of the exercise. Symbols or Indigenous artefacts can also be brought and held by the participants during the exercise.

- **Scrolls:** The texts printed on the scrolls are part of the script. They should be printed out ahead of time and rolled up. The number of the scroll should be clearly written on the outside of the scroll so that those holding them can respond to the call when their number is called.

Index cards:

- You need **white cards** for just less than half the participants.
- **Important:** for a small group (less than 22 persons), distribute the white cards to a third of the participants.
- In the case of a very small group (12 persons or less) distribute only 2 white cards.
- You need **2 blue cards**. For a small group (less than 22 persons) give out only 1 blue card.
- You need **3 yellow cards**, one of which will have a large “X” printed on it. For a large group (more than 30 persons), distribute 6 yellow cards. For a small group (less than 22 persons) distribute only 2 yellow cards.

- **Roles:** One volunteer plays the role of **narrator**. (Ordinarily, this is the teacher or the person who is responsible for the group) and at least one other person acts as the **European**. The version presented here can be adapted. For example, if you wish, you can modify the roles and have more than one narrator or European. It is possible to have a European, a Canadian and a Québécois. You can also add an animator and have more than one narrator.

Time required

The Blanket Exercise lasts about an hour, followed by a period of exchange in a talking circle. This latter part could also last an hour. This debriefing at the end is an integral part of the exercise and should never be neglected.

The Number of Participants

The blanket exercise works best with a group of between 15 and 60 persons. A group of 35 is ideal, taking into account the debriefing at the end. With more than 60 persons it might be better to consider a theatrical form. With a small group, it is important to assure that there will not be too large a number of persons leaving the blankets. In that case then, it is better to distribute a smaller number of white and yellow cards than indicated. The larger the group is the more difficult it will be to have a satisfying discussion at the end.

Support During and After the Exercise

The Blanket Exercise can provoke a variety of emotions. Consider the sort of support you will be able to furnish during the workshop and also afterward. This could take the form of a designated person whose specific role it is to support those who are emotionally triggered. To this end, the presence of Indigenous elders is always appreciated. Their presence can also lift the quality of the exchange following the exercise.

It can happen that the exercise includes Indigenous participants who may experience strong emotions due to their personal involvement with the topics treated in the exercise.

Before beginning, explain clearly what will be taking place and inform the participants that they can step aside at any point if they wish.

Consider also a soothing ritual or constructive way to close the session.

Participants

Certain roles can be grouped together or played by specific persons:

First group (one or two persons)

The animator

The narrator

Second group, the roles:

The Indigenous person

The European

The Canadian

The Québécois

Text for the Blanket Exercise

Listen to Indigenous Voices

The animator invites one or two “Indigenous” participants to read aloud the two following quotes:

Indigenous person (Scroll # 1):

*“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 that, where would we be?”*

—Kateri, a Mohawk youth from a community in Quebec

Indigenous person: (Scroll # 2)

Quote from Vicky, an Indigenous student:

“As an individual, I fear for my education. If I don’t have the necessary qualifications to go to college, what will my future look like? Life, for us, will become more and more difficult, while for non-Indigenous people, it will become easier. That’s not right. We deserve better, much better.”

Setting

The **Animator** provides a brief summary of the objectives of the exercise: To help non-Indigenous persons better understand the territorial dispossession of Indigenous peoples and its consequences.

++ To raise awareness among non-Indigenous peoples.

++ If Indigenous persons participate in the exercise, the animator should gather their comments and provide them with an opportunity to look at their own history in a different light, with a certain distance. The animator can invite them to share their knowledge and their feelings with the non-Indigenous participants.

The animator may ask the following questions: What are your reasons for participating? What do you expect from this? What are you curious about? What are your fears as you begin this activity?

It is important to explain that for certain people, this activity can trigger complex feelings. The participants should be reassured that, by sharing in the “talking circle” at the end, they will be able, if they wish, to share their feelings in a respectful way.

The **Animator** invites participants to take off their shoes and to stand on the blankets. The animator asks them to circulate on the blankets – to use and occupy this space – as if it were their home: “You are at home here; take the time to really feel that.”

The **Animator** then asks the European to come forward.

Recognition and negation of Indigenous Peoples

Narrator:

These blankets represent the northern part of Turtle Island, or what we now know as Canada, before the arrival of Europeans. You represent the Indigenous peoples, the original people.

Turtle Island is your home and home to millions of people like you. You comprise hundreds of nations. You fished and hunted and farmed. Each community had its own language, culture, traditions, laws and governments. The land is important for you. All your needs – food, clothing, housing, culture, spirituality – are met by the land represented here by the blankets. In return, you take responsibility for the care of the land very seriously.

The **Animator** introduces the person playing the role of the European.

European:

[Unrolls and reads scroll # 3:]

“Two documents written by Popes in the 15th century make up the Doctrine of Discovery. According to this doctrine, lands inhabited by people like you, who are not Christian, belong by right to us, the Europeans, who have “discovered” them. Indigenous peoples living on this land are placed under the protection and control of Christian nations who have “discovered” their lands.

Narrator :

And so it was that the process of dispossession of the lands on Turtle Island by Europeans began. They started in the East and progressively moved West across the continent.

[The **European** walks around the blankets and begins to shake hands, while handing out cards -- white (for about half those present) and a few yellow ones. One of the yellow cards should have a X printed on it. Give blue cards to two of the participants.] (Note: If the group is large enough, make sure that at least 10 participants do not receive any card.)

Recognition of the rights of Indigenous Peoples

Narrator:

The newly arrived settlers depended on you for their survival and you helped them understand how you did things traditionally: how you educated your children, how you took care of the sick, how some among you cultivated the land and how you hunted, fished and gathered edibles. Some aspects of your cultures were more difficult for them to understand. This included your relationship with Mother Earth: She could never belong exclusively to anyone but rather you belonged to her and you are her guardians.

European :

[Unrolls Scroll # 4 and reads aloud:]

In the beginning there was a lot of cooperation and support between you and us, the settlers. The settlers and their leaders recognized you, the First Peoples, as sovereign nations. They recognized you as independent nations. They made agreements or treaties with you. These treaties explained how you were going to share the land and the water, the animals and the plants. These treaties were very important because they were agreements between you and the kings and queens of countries in Europe. They made these agreements with you because you were more numerous and powerful, and the land belonged to you and you had your own governments. The treaties officially recognized your power and independence as nations.

Narrator:

At the same time, the settlers believed that the land you were living on was destined to be theirs. They took permanent possession in the name of their kings and gradually settled in. This created tensions and conflicts.

European:

[Unrolls Script # 5 and reads aloud:]

In 1701, after years of wars and conflict involving Indigenous peoples and France, a treaty known as the Great Peace of Montreal was signed, under the auspices of the Wendat² chief, Kondiaronk, and Sieur de Callière, the Governor of New France. It was a unique moment in the diplomatic history of North America.

² Wendat = Huron.

Indigenous person:

[Unrolls Scroll #6 and reads aloud:]

During the course of the 17th century, we concluded a series of treaties with the British crown: these constitute the “Covenant Chain”, which links the two parties. There is a duty to take care of this chain. Settlers are expected to take care of this chain by supporting and respecting the Haudenosaunee³. If settlers neglect their duties or exploit the Iroquois, we will consider the chain to have been broken and it will take a long process to restore good relations.

Narrator:

On September 5th, 1760, two nations – the Huron-Wendat and the British, entered into a treaty of peace, harmony and alliance. The text of that treaty envisaged – and continues to envisage – the clear recognition and protection of Indigenous rights in respect of their traditional territories, what the Huron-Wendat call the Nionwentsio, or the magnificent lands. This treaty was recognized as still binding by the Supreme Court of Canada in 1990.

European :

[Unrolls Scroll #7 and reads aloud:]

In the Royal Proclamation of 1763, George III, King of England, declared that Indigenous peoples have a right to the lands they possess, that settlers are forbidden to inhabit lands recognized as belonging to Indigenous peoples and that the only entity that can acquire such lands is the Crown.

Narrator:

For you, the Indigenous Peoples, treaties are very special and sacred agreements. They are declarations of peace, of friendship and of sharing based on respect and honesty.

Treaties explain how the land and waters should be shared, even as they help to maintain the peace that exists among you.

³ The Haudenosaunee are the nations of the Iroquois Confederation. This term literally means “people who build longhouses”.

Annexation of Indigenous territories that had been recognized

[The **European** slowly begins to fold the blankets so that the space represented by the blankets becomes smaller and smaller.]

The **Animator** reminds the participants that they should not step off the blankets. The objective is to remain on the blankets, even as the surface covered by the blankets become smaller and smaller.

Narrator:

Nevertheless, the Europeans had a different perspective on treaties. For them, the lands were something that could be bought and sold and the treaties were a way to make you give up your lands.

Until the war between Canada and the United States in 1812, the newcomers needed you to defend the territory, just as they needed you for an economy based on the fur market. But as soon as the War of 1812 ended, they didn't need your help on the battlefield. In addition, since the economy was now based on agriculture, the newly arrived Europeans began to look for more land. You had been indispensable; now you've become an encumbrance.

Sicknesses imported by the Europeans, such as smallpox, scarlet fever and tuberculosis – diseases that you had never previously known – decimated you. It is estimated that 50% of the Indigenous peoples would disappear – perhaps even as many as 90%.

The **Animator** asks the participants holding white cards to withdraw from the blankets, because they represent those who died of these many diseases.

“Please, observe a moment of silence for those who suffered and who died of these many diseases.”

European:

[He approaches one of the participants, gives them a folded blanket and then reads Scroll #8]

Sometimes, blankets infested with smallpox were deliberately given or traded to Indigenous peoples by military commanders, notably during the years of confrontation in the Great Lakes regions. You represent the many Indigenous people who died of smallpox, after having entered into contact with the blankets.

(Animator: *Please, remove yourself from the blankets.)*

[The **European** walks over to the “South” and chooses two participants, who are standing on the same blanket.]

Participant 1 (reads the following):

I represent the First Nations, who inhabited the territories recognized by the Royal Proclamation of 1763, extending from Labrador to the Great Lakes and including all the central part of North America. These lands are now going to be taken away from you, in part, by the Act of Quebec in 1774.

Narrator:

During the American War of Independence, General George Washington ordered the destruction of 40 Iroquois villages to punish the majority of the Iroquois who had sided with the British. Since that time, the President of the United States is called “Konotogarios” by the Iroquois people. This means “destroyer of villages.”

Participant 2 (reads the following):

I represent the First Nations which were divided, when a border was drawn between the newly established United States and the British colony of Canada, by the Treaty of Versailles in 1783. This border broke up our nations by separating us from each other.

Animator: *Please move to different blankets.*

[The **European** ushers each Indigenous person to separate blankets and then, with the **Animator**, goes to the “West” to choose another person.]

Narrator:

The construction of the railway allowed the settlers to move to the Prairies. Settlers needed land for agriculture and in 1868 the Government of Canada purchased an immense territory, known as Rupert’s Land, from the Hudson’s Bay Company. This created immense hardship for many among you who live on these lands, notably the Metis and the Cree. You, the Metis, under the leadership of Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont, fought for your lands, sometimes with the help of the Cree. You won some of these battles but, in the end, you were defeated.

Animator:

Please step off the blankets since you represent the Cree and Metis chiefs who died during these battles or who were put in prison or executed.

The Building of Canada to the Detriment of Indigenous Peoples

Narrator:

Those who have a blue card, please withdraw from the blankets. You represent those who died of hunger after being forced to leave your ancestral lands and your hunting grounds.

Canadian:

[Unrolls Script #9 and reads aloud:]

With the arrival of a growing number of us settlers, more land was needed. Some among us believed we were superior to other races and even to you. Soon, we didn’t see you anymore as friends and partners, but rather as a “problem” to be resolved.

We began to ignore and even to change our own laws to be able to take over your lands more easily. Some of your lands were appropriated during wars; others were acquired after your extinction.

Narrator:

As Indigenous peoples, you were losing more and more of your lands, your living space, your way of life, your culture and, in certain cases, even your reason for living.

Canadian:

[Unrolls Scroll # **10** and reads aloud:]

According to the British North America Act of 1867 and the Indian Act of 1876, you and your territories are now under the jurisdiction of the Federal Government of Canada. You will now live on reserves.

Narrator:

The Indian Act completely changed your lives. The Federal Government used this law to weaken you as specific cultural entities and thereby to more easily take over your lands.

Indigenous person:

[Unrolls Scroll # **11** and reads aloud:]

We cannot leave our reserve without permission. We do not have the right to vote. We cannot hold meetings to discuss our rights. Hunting and fishing are limited. Our spiritual practices -- such as the Shaking Tent, Water Divining, the Pow Wow, the Sun Dance, the Sweat Lodge -- are all forbidden. We cannot practice our traditional forms of government. If we try to engage in any of these practices, we risk going to prison.

Animator:

Please, fold your blankets so that you have just enough space to stand.

Indigenous person:

[Unrolls Scroll # **12** and reads aloud:]

Up until 1951, a clause in the Indian Act stipulated that members of First Nations, who obtained university diplomas, who were admitted to the liberal professions as doctors, teachers, lawyers, etc., or who were admitted into the Armed Forces, thereby renounced their legal status as Indians.

Narrator:

*Furthermore, according to provisions of the Indian Act, an Indigenous woman lost her legal status if she married a man without Indian status. Their children could not be registered as Indians. An Indigenous man, however, not only kept his Indian status if he married a non-Indigenous woman, but also gave that status to his wife and children. Not until 2009 and the **Mclvor** decision did the Canadian Parliament put an end to this discrimination against the wives and children of non-status Indigenous men. For years, the communities of Odanak and of Wolinak, as well as several Abenakis living off reserve, were engaged in a legal battle for the purpose of permitting women, as well as men, to pass on their Indian status. They finally won their battle in 2016 when the court decided in their favour in the **Descheneaux** decision.*

Canadian:

[Unrolls Scroll # **13** and reads aloud:]

Between 1880 and 1970, the Federal Government withdrew children from several First Nations as well as from Inuit and Metis communities. They were taken away from their homes and their communities and sent to residential schools operated by the Churches. The last Residential School closed in 1996.

[The **Animator** asks 3 participants with yellow cards to move to a blanket that has been set apart from the others and is empty. He points out to them that they represent those who were withdrawn from their communities and placed in residential schools far from their homes.]

Narrator:

[Unrolls Scroll # 14 and reads aloud:]

Many of you lost contact with your families. You forgot your language, culture and the customs of your original community, as you spent years in residential schools and practically never returned to your homes. Later on, many of you didn't learn how to be good parents. Some of you died in the schools.

[The **Animator** asks the person with a yellow card marked with an "X" to withdraw from the blanket. This person represents those students who died as a result of their experience in the residential schools.]

The **Animator** asks another person with a yellow card to return to their own community. The members of that community should turn their backs to the person who is returning. This symbolizes the isolation the children sometimes experienced upon their return to their community of origin.

Animator:

Please observe a moment of silence to honour those who died or were rejected by their community because of their years in a residential school.

Narrator:

Today, you are still treated differently. Your schools do not receive the same per capita funding as schools for non-Indigenous children in the rest of Canada. Even more, Indigenous children are more often taken from their homes and placed in foster homes than are the other Canadian children.

In the White Paper of 1969, another attempt was made to resolve the "Indian problem" by asking you, Indigenous peoples, to renounce your rights and your identity by becoming Canadians like all the other inhabitants.

They wanted to stop treating you as groups distinct from other Canadians. But, at what cost? That of the extinction of all the obligations to which the government had committed itself over many generations in treaties with First Nations! You would simply become a one set of cultures among many others in the country of multiculturalism. As Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau explained to the Indigenous Chiefs in 1969:

Canadian:

[Unroll Scroll # **15** and read aloud:]

“It is inconceivable, in my mind, that in a given society, a fraction of the population should be related to another through a treaty. We all have to be equal before the laws [...] and, to be clear, the majority of the treaties that already exist have, in any case, less and less relevance for the future. But, the things promised in an earlier time through treaties -- such as objects, fish nets, a certain quantity of gunpowder -- should be provided if we have not done so. But I don’t believe we have to encourage the Indians to think that their treaties will be always valid for other Canadians [...].”

Indigenous person:

[Unrolls Scroll # **16** and reads aloud:]

We are outraged by this attempt once again to take away our rights and we will organize to make this attempt. This is a moment that will mark the movement of Indigenous resistance in Canada that continues right up to today.

Animator:

Please unfold a corner of your blanket to represent this significant action of resistance against the loss of your rights and give yourself an applause.

[The **Canadian** moves forward and seeks to arrest those participants representing Indigenous people, who have unfolded too much of their blankets.]

Indigenous person:

[Unrolls Scroll # 17 and reads aloud:]

Over the years, more than 70 per cent of the land set aside for us in treaties has been lost or stolen by the government.

During this time, the treaties have been ignored by the non-Indigenous population. Large companies profited financially from Indigenous lands and their natural resources while we, the Indigenous peoples, received practically nothing. The land continues to be polluted and future generations will be burdened with the responsibility of redressing the situation.

Narrator:

Today, in 2016, even if some you reside on lands rich in natural resources, you continue to live in abject poverty.

And yet the treaties continue to be important for you. Your traditions show how land can be shared equally and peacefully. Unfortunately, this vision is not shared by the government and many non-Indigenous people. These latter see the treaties as contracts giving them control over more land.

The Appropriation of the North in Quebec

[The **Québécois** and the Animator move to the “North.”]

Narrator:

In Quebec, the dream was to conquer the North. Between 1850 and 1900, a thousand settlers each year established themselves in various regions of the Laurentian Shield. In 1910 they reached the most remote regions of the Laurentian Shield where the Anishinabek⁴, the Attikamekw, the Cree and the Innu⁵ have been established for generations.

⁴ Anishinabek = Algonquins.

⁵ Innus = Montagnais.

Narrator:

In 1912, the Government of Québec annexed the district of Ungava, which subsequently became known as “New Quebec.”

Québécois:

[Unrolls Scroll # **18** and reads aloud:]

By this acquisition, Quebec extends its territory and opens the door to the exploitation of natural resources found in the North, which it considers necessary for its economic development as a modern nation.

As a result several Indigenous communities were displaced to isolated areas -in the far North. These were arid lands unknown to them. The results were often disastrous.

[The **Animator** takes a blanket (symbolizing a piece of territory), folds it until it is small and directs a group to stand on it.]

Current struggles**Indigenous person:**

For the last 40 years, we, the Indigenous peoples of Quebec and Canada, have led struggles to vindicate our rights.

Narrator:

*In fact, the Supreme Court of Canada has recognized Indigenous claims in a number of landmark decisions. In the **Calder** decision, the Supreme Court held that the existence of Indigenous land rights did not depend upon their recognition by the Royal Proclamation of 1763, but rather upon whether, when European settlers arrived, the Indigenous nation had been living on these lands in an organized manner, as had their ancestors from time immemorial. Accordingly, governments had the obligation to negotiate agreements with an Indigenous nation, in order to have access to the resources found on the traditional land of that nation.*

Indigenous person

*In the **Sparrow** decision, the Supreme Court concluded that the members of an Indigenous nation had the ancestral right to fish, not only for food but also for social and ritual purposes, and that the government had the obligation to enter into negotiations with the Indigenous nation regarding the management of fish resources.*

Narrator:

*In the **Delgamuukw** case, the Court held that ancestral title could be established by referring to Indigenous occupation predating any affirmation by a European power of sovereignty over a territory. Ancestral title conveys several rights upon its holders, including the right to decide how the land will be used, the right to use and occupy the land, the right to possess the land, the right to the economic benefits derived from the land, and the right to manage the land in a proactive way.*

Indigenous person

*In the **Corbière** case, the Supreme Court denied the application of a provision of the Indian Act and permitted the members of an Indigenous community to vote in band council elections, even if they no longer resided on the reserve.*

Québécois:

The Oka Crisis that broke out in the summer of 1990 profoundly shook Quebec society. For the Mohawk people, this event was nothing less than a military occupation of their traditional territory, of their home. This crisis marked a turning point in the awareness by Québec and the larger Canadian societies of Indigenous realities which, until then, had been largely hidden and ignored by the majority of the population.

Indigenous person

This crisis generated many conflicts and opened many wounds within our own Mohawk community and among Indigenous peoples in general. However it forced Quebec society, as a whole, to open its eyes to the reality of Indigenous peoples. Even more, it served to reveal how our ancestral lands had been taken away from us in the 18th century by the political and legal manoeuvres of the Sulpicians.

[The **Animator** asks 2 or 3 persons to return to their place on the blankets, even if the space is very limited in a specific corner.]

Indigenous person:

[Unrolls Scroll # **19** and reads it aloud:]

A quote from Phil Fontaine, former Grand Chief of the Assembly of First Nations: "It is a matter of our relationship with one another, with our lands, our natural resources, our laws, our rights, our languages, our spirituality, our way of life."

Narrator:

In 2007 the majority of the countries of the United Nations adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This is a statement of international norms. Its writing and adoption took more than 20 years because of resistance, even the opposition of four States: Canada, the United States, Australia and New Zealand.

On November 12, 2010, the Government of Canada finally accepted the Declaration but, with certain conditions. The majority of the Indigenous groups and their allies see this Canadian approval of the Declaration as a first positive step toward a new collaboration that protects their rights.

Indigenous person:

[Unrolls Scroll # **20** and reads aloud:]

The Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is a unique document in the history of the United Nations, where we, the Indigenous Peoples are officially recognized at an international level for the first time. We can find support in this Declaration, which is a very important element in our political strategy.

[The **Animator** asks those who are still standing on the blankets to unfold a small part. If they unfold too much, the Canadian pushes back.]

Narrator:

However, the government of continues to have difficulty in recognizing the rights of Indigenous peoples. For example, the disappearance and assassination of several hundred of your women, sisters or daughters over the last decades has been under consideration for several years by the government as isolated criminal acts rather than as a sociological phenomenon that reveals a collective discrimination.

Indigenous person:

Nevertheless, during this same period, our visions and ways of doing things have restoring the strength of those of us, who are walking on the path of healing, of taking things in hand, of resistance and of protection of the land. Movements that carry promise, like "Idle No More", bring together many of us in positive actions. These movements are appealing to a growing number of Québécois, Canadians and citizens in different parts of the world to become aware of the urgent need to protect the land and our Mother Earth. This protection is no longer just an Indigenous concern. We are witnesses of a destruction that is affecting everyone -- everyone.

Conclusion

[An **Indigenous elder** now addresses the whole assembly]

“What you have just experienced is aimed at making you more aware and open to listening to one another. Today, we must agree to strengthen our solidarity to protect our territory and our Mother Earth.”