

## **A. Selections from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi, and the Institutions of the Bahá'í Faith Pertaining to Indians of the Western Hemisphere.**

### **I. Purpose of the Coming of Bahá'u'lláh**

Indeed, the purpose of the coming of Bahá'u'lláh is to lift the yoke of oppression from His loved ones, to liberate all the people of the world, and to provide the means for their abiding happiness. In this regard, the Tablets of the Divine Plan addressed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to North America make it clear that the destiny of the native Americans as an illumined and fulfilled people is linked to the quality of their response to the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. (Letter dated 12 February 2002, written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, [http://bahai-library.com/uhj\\_indian\\_nations](http://bahai-library.com/uhj_indian_nations))

### **II. Capacity of American Indians to Comprehend the Faith**

The understanding of His words and the comprehension of the utterances of the Birds of Heaven are in no wise dependent upon human learning. They depend solely upon purity of heart, chastity of soul, and freedom of spirit. This is evidenced by those who, today, though without a single letter of the accepted standards of learning, are occupying the loftiest seats of knowledge; and the garden of their hearts is adorned, through the showers of divine grace, with the roses of wisdom and the tulips of understanding. Well is it with the sincere in heart for their share of the light of a mighty Day! (Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 210)

It is a great mistake to believe that because people are illiterate or live primitive lives, they are lacking in either intelligence or sensibility. On the contrary, they may well look on us, with the evils of our civilization, with its moral corruption, its ruinous wars, its hypocrisy and conceit, as people who merit watching with both suspicion and contempt. We should meet them as equals, well-wishers, people who admire and respect their ancient descent, and who feel that they will be interested, as we are in a living religion and not in the dead forms of present-day churches. (From a letter dated September 21, 1951, written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Teaching Committee of the Americas in *Lights of Guidance*, #1777, p. 524)

For Bahá'u'lláh has promised His Divine assistance to every one who arises with a pure and detached heart to spread His Holy Word, even though he may be bereft of every human knowledge and capacity, and notwithstanding the forces of darkness and of opposition which may be arrayed against him. (Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 3 February 1937, in *The Unfolding Destiny of the British Bahá'í Community*, p. 436)

### **III. Capacity of American Indians to Serve the Faith**

You must give great importance to teaching the Indians, i e., the aborigines of America. ... Likewise, should these Indians and aborigines be educated and obtain guidance, there is no doubt that through the divine teachings, they will become so enlightened as in turn to shed light to all regions. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Baha'i Scriptures*, pp. 528-529)

Note: This passage has been officially retranslated as:

Attach great importance to the indigenous population of America. For these souls may be likened unto the ancient inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula, who, prior to the Mission of Muhammad, were like unto savages. When the light of Muhammad shone forth in their midst, however, they became so radiant as to illumine the world. Likewise, these Indians, should they be educated and guided, there can be no doubt that they will become so illumined as to enlighten the whole world. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, p. 33)

These Arab tribes were in the lowest depths of savagery and barbarism, and in comparison with them the savages of Africa and wild Indians of America were as advanced as a Plato. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 1981 edition, p. 19)

Note: This passage has been officially retranslated as:

These Arab tribes were most barbarous and rapacious, and in comparison with them the wild and fierce natives of America were the Platos of the age...('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 edition, p. 23)

“You must attach great importance,” writes ‘Abdu'l-Bahá in the Tablets of the Divine Plan, “to the Indians, the original inhabitants of America. For these souls may be likened unto the ancient inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula, who, prior to the Revelation of Muhammad, were like savages. When the Muhammadan Light shone forth in their midst, they became so enkindled that they shed illumination upon the world. Likewise, should these Indians be educated and properly guided, there can be no doubt that through the Divine teachings they will become so enlightened that the whole earth will be illumined.” “If it is possible,” ‘Abdu'l-Bahá has also written, “send ye teachers to other portions of Canada; likewise, dispatch ye teachers to Greenland and the home of the Eskimos.” “God willing,” He further has written in those same Tablets, “the call of the Kingdom may reach the ears of the Eskimos.... Should you display an effort, so that the fragrances of God may be diffused among the Eskimos, its effect will be very great and far-reaching.” ('Abdu'l-Bahá quoted by Shoghi Effendi in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 55)

Particular attention, I feel, should, at this juncture, be directed to the various Indian tribes, the aboriginal inhabitants of the Latin republics, whom the Author of the Tablets of the Divine Plan has compared to the “ancient inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula-

la.” “Attach great importance,” is His admonition to the entire body of the believers in the United States and the Dominion of Canada, “to the indigenous population of America. For these souls may be likened unto the ancient inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula, who, prior to the Mission of Muhammad, were like unto savages. When the light of Muhammad shone forth in their midst, however, they became so radiant as to illumine the world. Likewise, these Indians, should they be educated and guided, there can be no doubt that they will become so illumined as to enlighten the whole world.” (Shoghi Effendi, *The Citadel of Faith*, p. 16)

Of equal importance is the strenuous yet highly meritorious obligation to add, steadily and rapidly, to the number of the American Indian and Eskimo adherents of the Faith, and to ensure their active participation in both the teaching and administrative spheres of Bahá’í activity -- a task so clearly emphasized by the Pen of the Centre of the Covenant, and in the consummation of which the Canadian Bahá’í Community is destined to play so conspicuous a part. (Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to Canada* 1965 edition, p. 61; also in the 1999 edition, p.243)

He attaches the greatest importance to this matter as the Master has spoken of the latent strength of character of these people and feels that when the Spirit of the Faith has a chance to work in their midst, it will produce remarkable results. (Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to Canada*, 1986 edition, p. 65; also in the 1999 edition, p. 271)

He has always been very anxious to have the Indians taught and enlisted under the banner of the Faith, in view of the Master's remarkable statements about the possibilities of their future and that they represent the aboriginal American population. (Shoghi Effendi, in Bahá’í News, #188, October 1946 pp. 3-4; also in *Developing Distinctive Bahá’í Communities Guidelines for Spiritual Assemblies*, p. 7.51)

‘Abdu’l-Bahá Himself has stated how great are their potentialities... (Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, in *A Special Measure of Love*, pp. 19-20; also in *Developing Distinctive Bahá’í Communities Guidelines for Spiritual Assemblies*, p. 7.52)

The original population of the United States was very dear to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's heart, and He foretold for the Indians a great future if they accepted and became enlightened by the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.

To believe in the Mouthpiece of God in His Day confers very great blessings, not only on individuals, but on races, and He hopes that you who are now numbered amongst the followers of Bahá'u'lláh will give His Message to many more of your tribe, and in this way hasten for your people a bright and happy future. (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 21, 1947 *Lights of Guidance*, #1802, p. 531)

As you know, the Master attached the utmost importance to the teaching of the Indians in America. The Guardian therefore hopes that your Assembly will devote considerable energy to this most important matter so that contacts are made with Indians in all of the countries under your jurisdiction and some of these Indians become confirmed in the Faith.

If the light of Divine Guidance enters properly into the lives of the Indians, it will be found that they will arise with a great power and will become an example of spirituality and culture to all of the people in these countries.

The Master has likened the Indians in your Countries to the early Arabian Nomads at the time of the appearance of Muhammad. Within a short period of time they became the outstanding examples of education, of culture and of civilization for the entire world. The Master feels that similar wonders will occur today if the Indians are properly taught and if the power of the Spirit properly enters into their living. (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Central America and Mexico, August 22, 1957, *Lights of Guidance*, #2029, p. 600)

In the Tablets of the Divine Plan, the Master pays the utmost attention to this most important matter. He states that if the Power of the Holy Spirit today properly enters into the minds and hearts of the natives of the great American continents that they will become great standard bearers of the Faith, similar to the Nomads (Arabians) who become the most cultured and enlightened people under the Muhammadan civilization. (From letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of Brazil, Peru, Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela, August 22, 1957, *Lights of Guidance*, #1776, p. 524)

The third all-American Indian Bahá'í Assembly was formed last April in Bolivia, and since then many hundreds of Indians have entered the Faith -- outstanding steps toward fulfillment of one of the dearest hopes of the beloved Guardian, who urged the friends on many occasions to remember the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in the Divine Plan, that if the original inhabitants of America accepted the Faith they would become as enlightened as the original inhabitants of Arabia who accepted the Prophet Muhammad. (Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, February 11, 1960, *Ministry of the Custodians*, p. 181)

Almost half a century ago 'Abdu'l-Bahá instructed the believers in the United States and Canada to "attach great importance to the . . . original inhabitants of America", promising that the Indians, like the original inhabitants of Arabia who accepted and supported Muhammad would, when educated and guided, "become so enlightened that the whole earth will be illumined." The nineteenth objective of that portion of the World Crusade entrusted in 1953 to the American Bahá'í Community by its Guardian was the "conversion to the Faith of members of the leading Indian tribes." (Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, Riḍván 1961, to Annual Bahá'í Conventions, *Ministry of the Custodians* p. 270)

A bright picture stretches before the eyes of the believers in the New World and the harvest, in many places, stands ready for the garner's hand. The greatest possibilities for mass conversion at the present time are undoubtedly amongst the Indian tribes. As long ago as 1947 the Guardian wrote that particular attention should be directed to the "various Indian tribes, the aboriginal inhabitants of the Latin republics, whom the Author of the Tablets of the Divine Plan has compared to the 'ancient inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula'". He then quoted the wonderful words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá regarding them: "Attach great importance to the indigenous population of America. For these souls may be likened unto the ancient inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula, who, prior to the Mission of Muhammad, were like unto savages. When the light of Muhammad shone forth in their midst, however, they became so radiant as to illumine the world. Likewise, these Indians, should they be educated and guided, there can be no doubt that they will become so illumined as to enlighten the whole world." (Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, Riḍván 1961, to those gathered for the Election of the 21 Independent Latin American National Spiritual Assemblies, *Ministry of the Custodians*, p. 280)

May not, in the mysterious workings of God's Plan, so far above the capacities of our finite minds to grasp, this process of conversion on a large scale of the peoples of the Pacific Islands, the heart of India, the African continent and the descendants of the aboriginal population of the Americas now taking place, release forces which will have wide repercussions in those venerable strongholds of both Eastern and Western culture whose people, overcome by spiritual lassitude, disillusioned and cynical, find themselves indifferent for the most part to the redemptive Message of Bahá'u'lláh? (Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, Riḍván 1962, to Annual Bahá'í Conventions *Ministry of the Custodians*, p. 349)

"...Should these Indians be educated and properly guided, there can be no doubt that through the divine teachings they will become so enlightened that the whole earth will be illumined," should have exerted a magnetic attraction upon a number of ardent souls in the northern continent, eager to serve in so promising a field.

(The Universal House of Justice, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1968-1973*, p. 55)

Note: When the new volume of Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963-1986 was published this passage was rendered slightly differently:

Little wonder that South America, ... of whose indigenous believers the Master ... wrote "should they be educated and guided, there can be no doubt that through the divine teachings they will become so illumined as to enlighten the whole world," should have exerted a magnetic attraction upon a number of ardent souls in the northern continent, eager to serve in so promising a field. (The Universal House of Justice, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963-1986*, ¶82.2, p. 171)

In the Divine Plan bequeathed to you by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is disclosed the glorious destiny of those who are the descendants of the early inhabitants of your continent. (Universal House of Justice: Riḍván Message to the Followers of Bahá’u’lláh in North America: Alaska, Canada, Greenland and the United States, Riḍván 153, 1996, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1986-2001*, ¶220.8, p. 508)

Particularly do the Master and the Guardian point to the Afro-Americans and the Amerindians, two great ethnic groups whose spiritual powers will be released through their response to the Creative World. But our Teachings must touch all, must include all people. And, in this hour of your tireless activity what special rewards shall come to those who will arise, summoned by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Words: ‘Now is the time to divest yourselves of the garment of attachment to this phenomenal realm, be wholly severed from the physical world, become angels of heaven, and travel and teach through all these regions.’ (The Universal House of Justice: Message to the Caribbean Conference, May 1971; *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963-1986*, ¶97.3, p. 200)

The original population of the United States was very dear to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s heart, and He foretold for the Indians a great future if they accepted and became enlightened by the Teachings of Bahá’u’lláh. To believe in the Mouthpiece of God in His Day confers very great blessings, not only on individuals, but on races, and He hopes that you who are now numbered amongst the followers of Bahá’u’lláh will give His Message to many more of your tribe, and in this way hasten for your people a bright and happy future. (Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, *Lights of Guidance*, #1802, p. 531)

We are heartened at the prospect that from indigenous peoples of this vast oceanic area, the Ainu, the Japanese, the Chinese, the Koreans, the Okinawans, the Micronesians, the American Indians, the Eskimos, and the Aleuts vast numbers will soon enter the Faith. (The Universal House of Justice: Message to the North Pacific Oceanic Conference, Sapporo, Japan, September, 1971, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963-1986*, ¶100.4, p. 204)

In this regard, the Tablets of the Divine Plan addressed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to North America make it clear that the destiny of the native Americans as an illumined and fulfilled people is linked to the quality of their response to the Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh. (Written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, 12 February 2002, [www.bahai-library.com/uhj/indian.nations.html](http://www.bahai-library.com/uhj/indian.nations.html) )

#### **IV. Dissolving Prejudice: Limitations of European Civilization**

All the peoples of Europe, notwithstanding their vaunted civilization, sink and drown in this terrifying sea of passion and desire, and this is why all the phenomena of their culture come to nothing. Let no one wonder at this statement or deplore it. The primary purpose, the basic objective, in laying down powerful laws and setting up great

principles and institutions dealing with every aspect of civilization, is human happiness; and human happiness consists only in drawing closer to the Threshold of Almighty God, and in securing the peace and well-being of every individual member, high and low alike, of the human race; and the supreme agencies for accomplishing these two objectives are the excellent qualities with which humanity has been endowed.

A superficial culture, unsupported by a cultivated morality, is as "a confused medley of dreams," (Qur'án 12:44; 21:5) and external lustre without inner perfection is "like a vapor in the desert which the thirsty dreameth to be water." (Qur'án 24:39.) For results which would win the good pleasure of God and secure the peace and well-being of man, could never be fully achieved in a merely external civilization.

The peoples of Europe have not advanced to the higher planes of moral civilization, as their opinions and behavior clearly demonstrate. Notice, for example, how the supreme desire of European governments and peoples today is to conquer and crush one another, and how, while harboring the greatest secret repulsion, they spend their time exchanging expressions of neighborly affection, friendship and harmony. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, pp. 60-61)

I hope, God willing, the day may come when I shall see the red men, the Indians, with you, also Japanese and others. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 428)

It is a great mistake to believe that because people are illiterate or live primitive lives, they are lacking in either intelligence or sensibility. On the contrary, they may well look on us, with the evils of our civilization, with its moral corruption, its ruinous wars, its hypocrisy and conceit, as people who merit watching with both suspicion and contempt. We should meet them as equals, well-wishers, people who admire and respect their ancient descent, and who feel that they will be interested, as we are in a living religion and not in the dead forms of present-day churches. (From a letter dated September 21, 1951, written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Teaching Committee of the Americas in *Lights of Guidance*, #1777, p. 524)

## **V. Dissolving Prejudice: Moral Accomplishments of non-Western Civilizations**

Such is the binding force of the Word of God, which uniteth the hearts of them that have renounced all else but him, who have believed in His signs, and quaffed from the Hand of glory the Kawthar of God's holy grace. Furthermore, how numerous are those peoples of divers beliefs, of conflicting creeds, and opposing temperaments, who through the reviving fragrance of the divine springtime, breathing from the Ridván of God, have been arrayed with the new robe of divine Unity, and have drunk from the cup of His singleness. (Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 112-113)

The susceptibilities of these races and nations,...differing widely in their customs and standards of living, should at all times be carefully considered, and under no circumstances neglected. (Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, p. 25)

The Universal House of Justice is deeply concerned about the welfare of Indian people of America and yearns to see them take their rightful place as a significant element in the spiritualization of humanity, the construction of a unified world, and the establishment of a global civilization. (From a letter dated 29 March 1993 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, cited in a letter to the Continental Board of Counsellors in the Americas, 20 June 2002. See: [http://bahai-library.com/pdf/b/bidwell\\_many\\_messengers\\_presentation.pdf](http://bahai-library.com/pdf/b/bidwell_many_messengers_presentation.pdf) )

There is a tendency to feel that other peoples' cultures are less refined than one's own. This feeling is confirmed when contact with another people is superficial. But whenever those from outside penetrate another culture and discover its depth and subtleties, they develop an attitude of genuine respect for the people. At the most profound depth of every culture lies veneration of the sacred. Efforts to advance the Faith in rural areas, then, are most successful when the sacred in the culture of the villagers is identified and they are assisted in transferring their loyalty and allegiance to the Faith, placing Bahá'u'lláh and His Covenant at that sanctified core of their universe. It is here, at the very heart of a culture, that the process of the transformation of a people begins. (The International Teaching Centre to all Counsellors, 21 August 1994. See: [http://bahai-library.com/pdf/d/dely\\_wildfire.pdf](http://bahai-library.com/pdf/d/dely_wildfire.pdf))

## **VI. Winning the Unqualified Adherence of Indians--No more laudable and meritorious service at this hour**

God willing, the call of the Kingdom may reach the ears of the Eskimos, the inhabitants of the Islands of Franklin in the north of Canada, as well as Greenland. Should the fire of the love of God be kindled in Greenland, all the ice of that country will be melted, and its cold weather become temperate -- that is, if the hearts be touched with the heat of the love of God, that territory will become a divine rose garden and a heavenly paradise, and the souls, even as fruitful trees, will acquire the utmost freshness and beauty. Effort, the utmost effort, is required. Should you display an effort, so that the fragrances of God may be diffused among the Eskimos, its effect will be very great and far-reaching. God says in the great Qur'án: A day will come wherein the lights of unity will enlighten all the world. "The earth will be irradiated with the light of its Lord." In other words, the earth will become illumined with the light of God. That light is the light of unity. "There is no God but God." The continent and the islands of Eskimos are also parts of this earth. They must similarly receive a portion of the bestowals of the Most Great Guidance. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, pp. 27-28)



If it is possible, send ye teachers to other portions of Canada; likewise, dispatch ye teachers to Greenland and the home of the Eskimos. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, p. 87)

Nor can we fail to notice the special endeavors that have been exerted by individuals as well as Assemblies for the purpose of establishing contact with minority groups and races in various parts of the world, such as the Jews and Negroes in the United States of America, the Eskimos in Alaska, the Patagonian Indians in Argentina, the Mexican Indians in Mexico, the Inca Indians in Peru, the Cherokee Indians in North Carolina, the Oneida Indians in Wisconsin, the Mayans in Yucatan, the Lapps in Northern Scandinavia, and the Maoris in Rotorua, New Zealand. (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 379-380)

Let anyone who feels the urge among the participators in this crusade, which embraces all the races, all the republics, classes and denominations of the entire Western Hemisphere, arise, and, circumstances permitting, direct in particular the attention, and win eventually the unqualified adherence, of the Negro, the Indian, the Eskimo, and Jewish races to his Faith. No more laudable and meritorious service can be rendered the Cause of God, at the present hour, than a successful effort to enhance the diversity of the members of the American Bahá'í community by swelling the ranks of the Faith through the enrollment of the members of these races. A blending of these highly differentiated elements of the human race, harmoniously interwoven into the fabric of an all-embracing Bahá'í fraternity, and assimilated through the dynamic processes of a divinely appointed Administrative Order, and contributing each its share to the enrichment and glory of Bahá'í community life, is surely an achievement the contemplation of which must warm and thrill every Bahá'í heart. "*Consider the flowers of a garden,*" 'Abdu'l-Bahá has written, "*though differing in kind, color, form, and shape, yet, inasmuch as they are refreshed by the waters of one spring, revived by the breath of one wind, invigorated by the rays of one sun, this diversity increaseth their charm, and addeth unto their beauty. How unpleasing to the eye if all the flowers and plants, the leaves and blossoms, the fruits, the branches and the trees of that garden were all of the same shape and color! Diversity of hues, form and shape, enricheth and adorneth the garden, and heighteneth the effect thereof. In like manner, when divers shades of thought, temperament and character, are brought together under the power and influence of one central agency, the beauty and glory of human perfection will be revealed and made manifest. Naught but the celestial potency of the Word of God, which ruleth and transcendeth the realities of all things, is capable of harmonizing the divergent thoughts, sentiments, ideas, and convictions of the children of men.*" (Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, pp. 54-55)

#### IMPORTANCE OF THE AMERICAN INDIANS:

Particular attention, I feel, should, at this juncture, be directed to the various Indian tribes, the aboriginal inhabitants of the Latin republics, whom the Author of the Tablets of the Divine Plan has compared to the "ancient inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula-

la." "Attach great importance," is His admonition to the entire body of the believers in the United States and the Dominion of Canada, "to the indigenous population of America. For these souls may be likened unto the ancient inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula, who, prior to the Mission of Muhammad, were like unto savages. When the light of Muhammad shone forth in their midst, however, they became so radiant as to illumine the world. Likewise, these Indians, should they be educated and guided, there can be no doubt that they will become so illumined as to enlighten the whole world." The initial contact already established, in the concluding years of the first Bahá'í century, in obedience to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Mandate, with the Cherokee and Oneida Indians in North Carolina and Wisconsin, with the Patagonian, the Mexican and the Inca Indians, and the Mayans in Argentina, Mexico, Peru and Yucatan, respectively, should, as the Latin American Bahá'í communities gain in stature and strength, be consolidated and extended. A special effort should be exerted to secure the unqualified adherence of members of some of these tribes to the Faith, their subsequent election to its councils, and their unreserved support of the organized attempts that will have to be made in the future by the projected national assemblies for the large-scale conversion of Indian races to the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh.

Nor should the peculiar position of the Republic of Panama be overlooked at the present stage in the development of the Faith in Latin America. "All the above countries," 'Abdu'l-Bahá, referring to the Central American republics in one of the Tablets of His Divine Plan, has affirmed, "have importance, but especially the Republic of Panama, wherein the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans come together through the Panama Canal. It is a center for travel and passage from America to other continents of the world, and in the future it will gain most great importance." "Likewise," He moreover has written, "ye must give great attention to the Republic of Panama, for in that point the Occident and the Orient find each other united through the Panama Canal, and it is also situated between the two great oceans. That place will become very important in the future. The teachings, once established there, will unite the East and the West, the North and the South."

The manifold activities initiated since the launching of the first Seven Year Plan should, under no circumstances, be neglected or allowed to stagnate. The excellent publicity accorded the Faith, and the contact established with several leaders in that republic should be followed up, systematically and with the greatest care, by the growing community within its confines. The initial contact with the Indians should be developed with assiduous care and unflinching patience. Furthermore, the strengthening of the bonds now being forged between the North American communities and their sister communities in Latin America must constitute, owing to the unique and central position occupied by that republic, one of the chief objectives of the Panamanian believers, the progress of whose activities deserves to rank as one of the most notable chapters of recent Latin American Bahá'í history.

Nor should the valuable and meritorious labors accomplished since the inception of the first Seven Year Plan in Punta Arenas de Magallanes, that far-off center situated not only on the southern extremity of the Western Hemisphere, but constituting the southernmost outpost of the Faith in the whole world, be for a moment neglected in the

course of the second stage in the development of the Divine Plan. The assembly already constituted in that city, the remarkable radio publicity secured by the believers there, the assistance extended by them to the teaching work in other parts of Chile, should be regarded only as a prelude to the work of consolidation which must be indefatigably pursued. This work, if properly carried out, in conjunction with the activities associated with the assemblies of Santiago, Valparaiso and Vina del Mar, and the groups of Puerto Montt, Valdivia, Quilpue, Temuco, Sewell, Chorrillos, Mulchen and other smaller ones, as well as several isolated localities in that republic, may well hasten the advent of the day when the Chilean followers of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh will have established the first independent national spiritual assembly to be formed by any single nation of Latin America. (Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, pp. 16-18)

To the First Canadian National Convention:

... and the formation of a nucleus of the Faith in the Territory of Greenland, singled out for special mention by the Author of the Divine Plan, and the participation of Eskimos and Red Indians in membership to share administrative privileges in local institutions of the Faith in Canada. I fondly hope and ardently pray that the celebration of the first centenary of the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh's prophetic mission will witness the triumphant consummation of the first historic Plan launched by the Canadian Bahá'í Community in a land whose future greatness and glory, both materially and spiritually, the Centre of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant twice emphatically proclaimed in His immortal Tablets. (Shoghi Effendi, April 14, 1948, *Messages to Canada*, 1965 edition, pp. 7-8)

Note: The revised edition restored this message to its original cable format.

...FORMATION NUCLEUS FAITH TERRITORY GREENLAND SINGLED OUT SPECIAL MENTION AUTHOR DIVINE PLAN PARTICIPATION ESKIMOS RED INDIANS MEMBERSHIP SHARE ADMINISTRATIVE PRIVILEGES LOCAL INSTITUTIONS FAITH IN CANADA. FONDLY HOPE ARDENTLY PRAY CELEBRATION FIRST CENTENARY BIRTH BAHÁ'U'LLÁH'S PROPHETIC MISSION WILL WITNESS TRIUMPHANT CONSUMMATION FIRST HISTORIC PLAN LAUNCHED CANADIAN BAHÁ'Í COMMUNITY IN LAND WHOSE FUTURE GREATNESS GLORY BOTH MATERIALLY SPIRITUALLY CENTRE BAHÁ'U'LLÁH'S COVENANT TWICE EMPHATICALLY PROCLAIMED HIS IMMORTAL TABLETS. (Shoghi Effendi, 13 April 1948, *Messages to Canada*, 1999 edition, pp. 103-104)

The Five Year Plan, now set in motion, must under no circumstances be allowed to lag behind its schedule. A befitting start should be made in the execution of the Plan in all its aspects. The initial steps should be relentlessly followed by additional measures designed to hasten the incorporation of your Assembly, to accelerate the multiplication of Local Assemblies, groups and isolated centres, throughout the Provinces of the Domin-

ion, to insure the stability of the outpost of the Faith which must be established in Newfoundland, and to incorporate a steadily growing element, representative of both the Indian and Eskimo races, into the life of the community. (Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to Canada*, 1965 edition, p. 11; also in the 1999 edition, p. 109)

As co-partner with the American Bahá'í Community in the execution of the Divine Plan, it must evince in both the administrative and pioneer fields, a heroism that may be truly worthy of its high calling. In the remote and inhospitable regions of the North, amidst the Eskimos of Greenland and the Indians of the Dominion of Canada; throughout the Provinces of a far flung territory where newly fledged assemblies, and nuclei of future Bahá'í institutions in the form of groups and isolated centres, lie scattered; in its relationships and negotiations with the local, provincial and national representatives of civil authority in issues affecting matters of personal status and the independence of the Faith and the establishment of its endowments; in its contact with the masses and in its effort to publicize the Faith, enhance its prestige and disseminate its literature, this community, so young, so vibrant with life, so laden with blessings, so rich in promise, must rise to such heights, achieve such fame as shall eclipse the radiance of its past administrative and pioneer achievements. (Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to Canada*, 1965 edition, pp. 22-23; also in the 1999 edition, p. 142)

The obstacles confronting it whether in Greenland, or among the Indians and the Eskimos of the extreme North, are truly formidable. Yet the potency infused into this community, through the Revelation of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Divine Plan, and the spiritual capacity engendered in its earliest members through His visit to their native land -- distinctions which it fully shares with its sister community in the Great Republic of the West -- empower it to discharge -- if it but rise to the occasion -- all the responsibilities it has undertaken and consummate the task to which it stands pledged. (Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to Canada*, 1965 edition, p. 25; also in the 1999 edition, p. 147)

The highly meritorious tasks initiated in both Greenland and Newfoundland need not be enlarged at the present hour, but should, under no circumstances, be allowed to suffer any setback. The work started among the Eskimos and Indians should be maintained at its present level, and should not be permitted to decline. An extraordinary concentration of effort, systematic, determined and sustained, is however required throughout all the nine Provinces of the Dominion, aiming at an unprecedented flow of contributions by the entire body of the believers, each according to his or her means, into the National Treasury; a marked increase in the number of pioneers; a much greater dispersion; a higher degree of austerity; a still nobler display of consecration -- all of which must result in a speedy multiplication of Assemblies and groups, which constitutes the core of the Plan, and on which hinges its fortunes. (Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to Canada*, 1965 edition, p. 26; also in the 1999 edition, p. 148)

In Newfoundland, in Greenland, among the Eskimos and Indians, through the incorporation of its National Assembly, the immediate objectives have been practically attained. The attention of the entire community must, in the remaining months ahead, be focused on the dire necessity of multiplying, at whatever cost, the number of pioneers, the rapid formation of groups, and the conversion of groups into Assemblies, so that the complete and total success of the Plan may be assured, and a triumphant community may step forward, confident and unencumbered by any liabilities, into a vast arena of service, prosecute a still more glorious mission, and win still mightier victories. (Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to Canada*, 1965 edition, p. 30; also in the 1999 edition, p. 158)

He urges you to concentrate on attracting the natives as much as possible, by that he means the Eskimos. These people have a right to hear of the glorious message of Bahá'u'lláh, and he hopes you will be instrumental in attracting many of them to the Faith. (Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual, May 7, 1954, *High Endeavours - Messages to Alaska*, # 69, p.57)

He feels that this is a very important opportunity which you have now obtained of teaching the Faith to the Eskimo people, [3] and he hopes your efforts will be crowned with success. [3] Janet Whitenack (Stout) had secured a school teaching position in the village of Tuluksak on the Kuskokwim River. (Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual, December 12, 1942, *High Endeavours - Messages to Alaska*, #4, p.6)

The Guardian urges the friends to exert even greater efforts, especially in the teaching and enrollment of the Eskimos. (Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Anchorage, August 26, 1955, *High Endeavours - Messages to Alaska*, # 22, p.23)

At the World Center of the Faith, where, at long last the machinery of its highest institutions has been erected, and around whose most holy shrines the supreme organs of its unfolding Order, are, in their embryonic form, unfolding; amidst the diversified tribes and races, peopling the Dependencies and Principalities of the Dark Continent of Africa; in the far-flung territories of Central and South America so alien in culture, temperament, habits, language and outlook; in the capital cities and traditional strongholds of a materially highly advanced yet spiritually famished, much tormented, fear-ridden, hopelessly-sundered, heterogeneous conglomeration of races, nations, sects and classes overspreading the continent of Europe; in the heart of the African continent, in the capital city of the Indian sub-continent; in one of the leading capitals of the Scandinavian countries in Northern Europe; in the very heart of the leading Republic of the Western Hemisphere, the standard-bearers of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, the champion-builders of the Administrative Order, the vanguard of the Heralds of His World Order, and the Chief and appointed executors of the Master Plan of the Center of His Covenant, have, in the course of the few, fast-fleeting months ahead, separating them from the grandest crusade thus far launched in Bahá'í history, been assigned tasks, obligations and responsibilities that they

can afford to neither minimize, neglect or shirk for a moment. (Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Bahá'í World: 1950-1957*, p. 33)

Earthly symbols of Bahá'u'lláh's unearthly Sovereignty must needs, ere the decade separating the two memorable Jubilees draws to a close, be raised as far north as Franklin beyond the Arctic Circle and as far south as the Falkland Islands, marking the southern extremity of the western hemisphere, amidst the remote, lonely, inhospitable islands of the archipelagos of the South Pacific, the Indian and Atlantic oceans, the mountain fastnesses of Tibet, the jungles of Africa, the deserts of Arabia, the steppes of Russia, the Indian Reservations of North America, the wastelands of Siberia and Mongolia, amongst the Eskimos of Greenland and Alaska, the Negroes of Africa, Buddhist strongholds in the heart of Asia, amongst Lapps of Finland, the Polynesians of the South Sea Islands, Negritos of the archipelagos of the South Pacific Ocean. (Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Bahá'í World: 1950-1957*, p. 44)

Shoghi Effendi is also most anxious for the Message to reach the aboriginal inhabitants of the Americas. (From letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Meso-America and the Antilles, July 11, 1951; in *A Special Measure of Love*, p. 5; also in *Lights of Guidance*, #1775, p. 523)

He has always been very anxious to have the Indians taught and enlisted under the banner of the Faith, in view of the Master's remarkable statements about the possibilities of their future and that they represent the aboriginal American population. (Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, in *Bahá'í News*, #188, October 1946, pp. 3-4; also in *Lights of Guidance*, #1796, p. 528)

The Americas have been a melting pot and a meeting place for the races of men, and the need is acute for the fulfillment of God's promises of the realization of the oneness of mankind. Particularly do the Master and the Guardian point to the Afro-Americans and the Amerindians, two great ethnic groups whose spiritual powers will be released through their response to the Creative Word. But our Teachings must touch all, must include all peoples. And, in this hour of your tireless activity, what special rewards shall come to those who will arise, summoned by 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Words: "Now is the time to divest yourselves of the garment of attachment to this phenomenal realm, be wholly severed from the physical world, become angels of heaven, and travel and teach through all these regions." (Universal House of Justice: *Message to the Caribbean Conference—May 1971 Messages from The Universal House of Justice 1968-1973*)

Note: When the new volume of Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963-1986 was published 'Abdu'l-Bahá's quoted words reflected a new translation:

The Americas have been a melting pot and a meeting place for the races of men, and the need is acute for the fulfilment of Gods promises of the realization of the oneness

of mankind. Particularly do the Master and the Guardian point to the Afro-Americans and the Amerindians, two great ethnic groups whose spiritual powers will be released through their response to the Creative Word. But our Teachings must touch all, must include all peoples. And, in this hour of your tireless activity, what special rewards shall come to those who will arise, summoned by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Words: "Now is the time for you to divest yourselves of the garment of attachment to this world that perisheth, to be wholly severed from the physical world, become heavenly angels, and travel to these countries."

(The Universal House of Justice, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963-1986*, ¶97.3, p. 200)

The principal obligation of the American Bahá’ís must therefore be to see that the Divine Message is effectively delivered to the native peoples. (Letter to an individual believer, dated 12 February 2002, written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, in [http://bahai-library.com/uhj\\_indian\\_nations](http://bahai-library.com/uhj_indian_nations))

In the Divine Plan bequeathed to you by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is disclosed the glorious destiny of those who are the descendants of the early inhabitants of your continent. We call upon the indigenous believers who are firmly rooted in the Bahá’í Teachings to aid, through both deed and word, those who have not yet attained that level of understanding. Progress along the path to their destiny requires that they refuse to be drawn into the divisiveness and militancy around them, and that they strive to make their own distinctive contribution to the pursuit of the goals of the Four Year Plan, both beyond the confines of North America and at home. They should be ever mindful of the vital contribution they can make to the work of the Faith throughout the American continent, in the circumpolar areas and in the Asian regions of the Russian Federation. (Universal House of Justice: Riḍván Message to the Followers of Bahá’u’lláh in North America: Alaska, Canada, Greenland and the United States, Riḍván 153, 1996, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1986-2001*, ¶220.8, p. 508)

## VII. Conversions—Long Overdue

A special effort should be exerted to secure the unqualified adherence of members of some of these tribes to the Faith, their subsequent election to its councils, and their unreserved support of the organized attempts that will have to be made in the future by the projected national assemblies for the large-scale conversion of Indian races to the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh. (Shoghi Effendi, *The Citadel of Faith*, pp. 16-17)

Of equal importance is the strenuous yet highly meritorious obligation to add, steadily and rapidly, to the number of the American Indian and Eskimo adherents of the Faith, and to ensure their active participation in both the teaching and administrative spheres of Bahá’í activity -- a task so clearly emphasized by the Pen of the Centre of the Covenant, and in the consummation of which the Canadian Bahá’í Community is des-

tinged to play so conspicuous a part. (Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to Canada* 1965 edition, p. 61; also in the 1999 edition, p.243)

Nor must the vital obligation of converting as speedily as possible, both the Eskimos and the American Indians, who, as time passes, must assume a notable share in the diffusion of the Faith and the establishment of its rising Order in these regions, be, under any circumstances, neglected... (Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Alaska, June 30, 1957, *High Endeavours - Messages to Alaska*, #42, pp. 37-38)

The long overdue conversion of the American Indians, the Eskimos and French Canadians, as well as the representatives of other minorities permanently residing within the borders of that vast Dominion, must receive, in the months immediately ahead, such an impetus as to astonish and stimulate the members of all Bahá'í communities throughout the length and breadth of the Western Hemisphere. (Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to Canada*, 1965 edition, p. 69; also in the 1999 edition, p. 266)

Shoghi Effendi is also most anxious for the Message to reach the aboriginal inhabitants of the Americas. These people for the most part downtrodden and ignorant should receive from the Bahá'ís special measure of love, and every effort be made to teach them. Their enrollment in the Faith will enrich them and us and demonstrate our principle of the Oneness of Man far better than words or the wide conversion of the ruling races ever can. (From letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Meso-America and the Antilles, July 11, 1951; in *A Special Measure of Love*, p. 5; also in *Lights of Guidance*, #1775, p. 523)

A bright picture stretches before the eyes of the believers in the New World and the harvest, in many places, stands ready for the garner's hand. The greatest possibilities for mass conversion at the present time are undoubtedly amongst the Indian tribes. As long ago as 1947 the Guardian wrote that particular attention should be directed to the "various Indian tribes, the aboriginal inhabitants of the Latin republics, whom the Author of the Tablets of the Divine Plan has compared to the ancient inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula". He then quoted the wonderful words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá regarding them: "Attach great importance to the indigenous population of America. For these souls may be likened unto the ancient inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula, who, prior to the Mission of Muhammad, were like unto savages. When the light of Muhammad shone forth in their midst, however, they became so radiant as to illumine the world. Likewise, these Indians, should they be educated and guided, there can be no doubt that they will become so illumined as to enlighten the whole world." (Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, Riḍván 1961, to those gathered for the Election of the 21 Independent Latin American National Spiritual Assemblies, *Ministry of the Custodians*, p. 280)

Efforts to reach the minorities should be increased and broadened to include all minority groups such as the Indians, Spanish-speaking people, Japanese and Chinese.



(The Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, 14 February, 1972, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1968-1973*, pp. 85-86) (This message does not appear in the new volume of Messages 1963-1986)

### **VIII. Progress Report: Contact Made with American Indians**

Through these teaching activities, some initiated by individual believers, others conducted through plans launched by organized Assemblies, the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh which, in His lifetime, had included within its ranks Persians, Arabs, Turks, Russians, Kurds, Indians, Burmese and Negroes, and was later, in the days of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, reinforced by the inclusion of American, British, German, French, Italian, Japanese, Chinese, and Armenian converts, could now boast of having enrolled amongst its avowed supporters representatives of such widely dispersed ethnic groups and nationalities as Hungarians, Netherlanders, Irishmen, Scandinavians, Sudanese, Czechs, Bulgarians, Finns, Ethiopians, Albanians, Poles, Eskimos, American Indians, Yugoslavians, Latin Americans and Maoris. (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 380)

In all these, as well as in all the chief libraries of Australia and New Zealand, nine libraries in Mexico, several libraries in Mukden, Manchukuo, and more than a thousand public libraries, a hundred service libraries and two hundred university and college libraries, including Indian colleges, in the United States and Canada, authoritative books on the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh have been placed. (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 385)

Particular attention, I feel, should, at this juncture, be directed to the various Indian tribes, the aboriginal inhabitants of the Latin republics, whom the Author of the Tablets of the Divine Plan has compared to the "ancient inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula." "Attach great importance," is His admonition to the entire body of the believers in the United States and the Dominion of Canada, "to the indigenous population of America. For these souls may be likened unto the ancient inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula, who, prior to the Mission of Muhammad, were like unto savages. When the light of Muhammad shone forth in their midst, however, they became so radiant as to illumine the world. Likewise, these Indians, should they be educated and guided, there can be no doubt that they will become so illumined as to enlighten the whole world." The initial contact already established, in the concluding years of the first Bahá'í century, in obedience to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Mandate, with the Cherokee and Oneida Indians in North Carolina and Wisconsin, with the Patagonian, the Mexican and the Inca Indians, and the Mayans in Argentina, Mexico, Peru and Yucatan, respectively, should, as the Latin American Bahá'í communities gain in stature and strength, be consolidated and extended. (Shoghi Effendi, *The Citadel of Faith*, p. 16)

...the constitution of nuclei in Newfoundland and Greenland and the participation of Eskimos and Red Indians in the local institutions of the Administrative Order. (Shoghi Effendi, *The Citadel of Faith*, pp. 47-48)

*Eighteenth*, the translation of Bahá'í literature into ten languages in Europe, (Basque, Estonian, Flemish, Lapp, Maltese, Piedmontese, Romani, Romansch, Yiddish and Ziryen; ten in America: Aguaruna, Arawak, Blackfoot, Cherokee, Iroquois, Lengua, Matabo, Maya, Mexican and Yahgan. Nineteenth, the conversion to the Faith of members of the leading Indian tribes. (Shoghi Effendi, *The Citadel of Faith*, p. 108)

... and the participation of Eskimos and Red Indians in membership to share administrative privileges in local institutions of the Faith in Canada.[2] [2 The Tablets of the Divine Plan, revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1916-17, and addressed severally to the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, constitute the authority for the successive Plans inaugurated by the Guardian for the spread of the Faith and the establishment of its Institutions throughout the world.]

(Shoghi Effendi to the Canadian Bahá'í Convention, April 14, 1948, *Messages to Canada*, 1965 edition, pp. 7-8; also in 1999 edition, pp. 103-104 with the date recorded as April 13, 1948)

... The next, most important task is to get Miss Gates [7] into Greenland. This is fraught with many difficulties, but he urges your Assembly to persevere and exert its utmost to remove every obstacle. He will specially pray that a way may open for her to enter that country. [7 Miss Nancy Gates -- American pioneer to Denmark who attempted to pioneer to Greenland, but was unable to do so.] (Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 23 June 1950, *Messages to Canada*, 1965 edition, p. 15; Also in the 1999 edition, p. 128)

#### TEACHING THE CANADIAN INDIANS:

The work being done by various Bahá'ís, including our dear Indian believer [1] who returned from the United States in order to pioneer amongst his own people, in teaching the Canadian Indians, is one of the most important fields of activity under your jurisdiction. The Guardian hopes that ere long many of these original Canadians will take an active part in Bahá'í affairs and arise to redeem their brethren from the obscurity and despondency into which they have fallen.

[1 James and Mrs. Melba Loft -- believers who pioneered from the United States to the Tyendinaga (Mohawk) Indian Reserve, near Shannonville, Ontario, 1949-] (Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 23 June 1950, *Messages to Canada*, 1965 edition, p. 16; Also in the 1999 edition, p. 129)

He was very happy to know that the work in connection with the Indians and the Eskimos is receiving special attention; and he would like your Assembly to please express to Miss Nan Brandle [1] his deep appreciation of the unique service she is rendering the Cause, and of the exemplary spirit which is animating her. He hopes other believers

will follow in her footsteps, and arise to do work in this very important field of Bahá'í activity. [1 Miss Nan Brandle -- beginning in 1950 served several years as a pioneer to the Indians in Department of Indian Affairs hospitals at Fisher River, Hodgson, Manitoba and at Moose Factory and Ohsweken, Ontario.]

...  
CONTACT WITH ARCTIC ESKIMOS:

He was also very pleased to see that Mr. Bond [1] had gone north and had been able to contact the Arctic Eskimos. He hopes that the way will open for this devoted believer to establish a more permanent contact in that area in some field of government work. [1 Jameson Bond -- first pioneer to the Canadian Arctic (District of Keewatin 1950, District of Franklin 1951-63, with Mrs. Gale Bond from 1953 on).]

The Guardian feels that, although the Canadian Bahá'ís are making excellent progress in consolidating their National Assembly and its subsidiary committees, in holding Conferences and Summer Schools, in sending forth travelling teachers, and in contacting the important minority groups, the Eskimos and Indians, that they are not making sufficient progress in the all-important field of pioneer activity.

(Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 1 March 1951, *Messages to Canada*, 1965 edition, pp. 19-20; Also in the 1999 edition, pp. 138-139)

CO-HEIR OF THE TABLETS OF THE DIVINE PLAN:

As co-partner with the American Bahá'í Community in the execution of the Divine Plan, it must evince in both the administrative and pioneer fields, a heroism that may be truly worthy of its high calling. In the remote and inhospitable regions of the North, amidst the Eskimos of Greenland and the Indians of the Dominion of Canada; throughout the Provinces of a far flung territory where newly fledged assemblies, and nuclei of future Bahá'í institutions in the form of groups and isolated centres, lie scattered; in its relationships and negotiations with the local, provincial and national representatives of civil authority in issues affecting matters of personal status and the independence of the Faith and the establishment of its endowments; in its contact with the masses and in its effort to publicize the Faith, enhance its prestige and disseminate its literature, this community, so young, so vibrant with life, so laden with blessings, so rich in promise, must rise to such heights, achieve such fame as shall eclipse the radiance of its past administrative and pioneer achievements. (Shoghi Effendi, 1 March 1951, *Messages to Canada*, 1965 edition, pp. 22-23; Also in the 1999 edition, p. 142)

PIONEER TO GREENLAND:

The departure of Mr. Bond [1] for the Arctic made the Guardian very happy; this, as well as the sailing of Mr. Bischoff [2] for Greenland, mark the opening stage of the campaign to carry the Faith to the Eskimos, a plan set forth by 'Abdu'l-Bahá and very dear to His heart. [1 Jameson Bond -- first pioneer to the Canadian Arctic (District of Keewatin 1950, District of Franklin 1951-63, with Mrs. Gale Bond from 1953)]

[2 Palle Bischoff -- Danish believer, the first pioneer to Greenland (1951-54).]

(Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 30 October 1951, *Messages to Canada*, 1965 edition, p. 24; Also in the 1999 edition, p. 145)

The Guardian was most happy to hear of the excellent work some of the Bahá'ís are doing with the Eskimos and the Indians, and considers their spirit most exemplary. They are rendering a far greater service than they, themselves, are aware of, the fruits of which will be seen, not only in Canada, but because of their repercussions, in other countries where primitive populations must be taught. (Shoghi Effendi, 8 June 1952, *Messages to Canada*, 1965 edition, p. 28; Also in the 1999 edition, p. 155)

#### TEACHING MINORITIES:

The beloved Guardian has directed me to write you concerning the important matter of teaching the minorities of Canada.

He has spoken in some detail to Miss Harvey [1] concerning the subject, and she can and will amplify this communication. He feels it most important that active work be done in connection with the French Canadians, Eskimos, and Indians. You are also now actively in touch with the Poles and Ukrainians in your country.

In order to intensify this work, the Guardian feels you should establish a Minorities Teaching Committee, with sub-committees to specialize in the teaching of French Canadians, Eskimos, and Indians. As the work spreads, you can add other sub-committees, such as one for Eastern Europe, or the countries under active consideration. In other words, sub-committees might be formed for regional areas of the globe, where their people form a goodly number of inhabitants of Canada.

Thus you would now have a Minorities Committee, with sub-committees to specialize in the teaching work of the Eskimos, another sub-committee for the Indians, another for the French Canadians, and another one for the Poles and Ukrainians.

[1 Miss Winnifred Harvey -- member of the National Spiritual Assembly 1950-61.]

(Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, December 27, 1956, *Messages to Canada*, 1965 edition, p. 64; Also in the 1999 edition, pp. 252-253)

#### IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING THE INDIANS:

He was very happy indeed to learn of the very active manner in which the Canadian Bahá'ís have taken hold of this most important subject of teaching the Indians.

He attaches the greatest importance to this matter as the Master has spoken of the latent strength of character of these people and feels that when the Spirit of the Faith has a chance to work in their midst, it will produce remarkable results

You [1] yourself are to be congratulated on the very wonderful work you have been doing with the Indians on the Tyendinaga Reserve. The Guardian greatly appreciates this service, and wishes you to know that he values it very highly. He hopes nothing will interfere with your carrying it forward to the fine conclusion which you hope will be the establishment of an Assembly on this reserve. It would be a distinct victory for the

Faith if that is accomplished. [1 Mrs. Peggy Ross -- member of the National Spiritual Assembly 1954-63, appointed a member of the Auxiliary Board for Teaching in 1958.]  
(Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, October 19, 1957, *Messages to Canada*, 1966 edition, p. 65; Also in the 1999 edition, p. 271)

DELIGHTED RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS URGE DIRECT SPECIAL ATTENTION VITAL URGENT NEEDS GREENLAND AND INDIANS ARDENTLY SUPPLICATING BLESSINGS MANIFOLD TASKS CONFRONTING YOUNG VALIANT PROMISING COMMUNITY. (Cable from Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, *Messages to Canada*, 1999 edition, p. 118)

Our beloved Guardian was very happy to receive your letter of September 10, which unfortunately took some time to reach him, or he would have answered sooner.

He is delighted over the success you have met with in your teaching efforts there, and very deeply appreciates the sacrifices you and your dear wife have made in order to render our Faith and your people, this valuable service.

He does not feel it is right for you and your family to impoverish yourselves further in order to remain on the Reservation; on the other hand your being there and living amongst the people is undoubtedly the best way to teach them. He, therefore, suggests you present your problem to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, and seek their advice and help.

He will pray that a way may open for you to earn your living properly, and also continue among the Indians.

He sends you and your family his love. (Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to Jim and Melba Loft, 30 October 1950, *Messages to Canada*, 1999 edition, p. 136)

ASSURE DELEGATES FOURTH ANNUAL CONVENTION HEARTFELT APPRECIATION NOBLE SENTIMENTS LOVING REMEMBRANCE SHRINES. APPEAL CONCENTRATION EFFORTS RESOURCES UNPRECEDENTED INCREASE PIONEERS STEADY MULTIPLICATION CENTRES GREENLAND VIGOUROUS PROSECUTION WORK INITIATED ESKIMOS RED INDIANS. SHARE HOPE PRAYER HOLY PRECIOUS RELIC MAY ENDOW ENTIRE COMMUNITY LENGTH BREADTH VAST DOMINION POTENTIALITIES ENABLE MEMBERS LEND COLLECTIVE TREMENDOUS IMPETUS TASK CONFRONTING THEM ATTAIN OBJECTIVES FIRST HISTORIC PLAN LAUNCHED NEWLY EMERGED RAPIDLY CONSOLIDATION HIGHLY PROMISING MUCH LOVED NATIONAL CANADIAN BAHÁ'Í COMMUNITY. (Cable from Shoghi Effendi to the National Convention, 29 April 1951, *Messages to Canada*, 1999 edition, p. 143)

He is delighted to see you are settled in such a virgin region (from our Bahá'í standpoint), and, although the teaching work will be very slowly at first, the effects of your labours will sooner or later be felt and be fruitful.

He will pray that the way may open for receptive souls to be found, especially among the Indians, and that you may soon claim at least one Bahá'í.

(Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to individual believers, 31 October 1951, *Messages to Canada*, 1999 edition, p. 150)

DEEPLY APPRECIATE MESSAGE DELEGATES. URGE ENTIRE COMMUNITY EXERT SUPREME EFFORT LAST YEAR SEOCND PHASE PLAN MULTIPLICATION LOCALITIES ASSEMBLIES INTENSIFICATION TEACHING ACTIVITIES PURCHASE LAND TEMPLE HAZÍRA INCORPORATION ASSEMBLIES TRANSLATION LITERATURE INDIAN LANGUAGES CONSOLIDATION ALLOTED NEWLY OPENED TERRITORIES. CALL URGENT TIME SHORT RESPONSIBILITIES GREAT. (Cable from Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly 1 May 1955, *Messages to Canada*, 1999 edition, p. 220)

As he has already cabled you, he approves of your moving to Calgary, from which point you will be working with the Indians in Alberta and Saskatchewan, and at the same time reinforcing the efforts of the friends in Calgary.

The teaching of the Indians is of the utmost importance. Although much contact work has been done, yet the Red Indian believers are very few in number. The Guardian would be very happy indeed to see a large number of the Indian race become Bahá'ís, so that the Indians may be properly represented within the Faith.

He is most happy that you will be engaged in this work, for which you are evidently so well qualified. (Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to Arthur Irwin, 21 October 1955, *Messages to Canada*, 1999 edition, p. 229)

Abdu'l-Bahá was most anxious that the Eskimo people should be taught the Message of this New Day, and it is a source of happiness to all Bahá'ís that you, a member of that race, have arisen to spread these teachings.[1] God has surely guided your steps and blessed your search for divine Truth.

P.S. It will interest you to know that there are now Bahá'ís active in Anchorage, Fairbanks, and the Eskimo village of Tuluksak, Alaska.

[1 Melba Call (King) was the first Eskimo to become a Bahá'í. While she was born and raised in Alaska, she was residing in New Mexico when she heard of the Faith and became a Bahá'í.]

(Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, July 24th, 1943, *High Endeavours - Messages to Alaska*, #5, pp. 7-8)

He compliments Mrs. Roberts on her youthful spirit, which has enabled her at her age to recognize this glorious Faith, and arise to serve it.[1] She must truly be an inspiration to other Alaskan Bahá'ís; and he was truly happy to know that your Community is distinguished by having the first Indian Alaskan [2] as one of its members. You seem to have made a "scoop"!

[1 Mrs. Sarah Mary ("Granny") Roberts was 87 years old when she became a Bahá'í.]

[2 Joyce Anderson Combs was the first Tlingit Indian to become a Bahá'í in Alaska. The first Alaskan Native to become a Bahá'í while living in Alaska was Agnes Parent (Harrison).] (Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, May 3, 1956 to the Bahá'í Community of Ketchikan, Alaska, *High Endeavours - Messages to Alaska*, #27, p. 26)

The news you conveyed of the enrollment of Miss Campbell [1] was most welcome. The Guardian is very proud to have these Indian Bahá'ís in the Faith, and hopes that they will make every effort to carry the Message of Bahá'u'lláh to their people, remembering always the promises of the beloved Master of how great the Indians would become when the illumination of this Revelation reached them. [1 Joyce Campbell (Baldwin)] (Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, May 23, 1956 to the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Ketchikan, *High Endeavours - Messages to Alaska*, #29, p. 27)

The Guardian was very happy to learn of the enrollment of another (the third) Indian.[1] He welcomes these three into the Faith and sends them his loving greetings. He hopes they will arise and teach their own people. He will pray for them and for the success of their teaching work among their people. [1 Martha Brown (Reed).]

(Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, December 20, 1956 to the Bahá'ís of Ketchikan, *High Endeavours - Messages to Alaska*, #35, p. 32)

So great a triumph, crowning so much patient and painstaking labour, won at the hour when the Bahá'í World Spiritual Crusade is entering the second year of the third phase in its irresistible unfoldment, must be celebrated through the initiation of a subsidiary Six-Year Plan on the part of the newly-formed Alaskan National Spiritual Assembly, for the purpose of speedily increasing the number of the followers of the Faith; of multiplying its Centres; of adding to its existing Local Spiritual Assemblies; of inaugurating a National Bahá'í Fund; of establishing a Summer School; of initiating local Bahá'í endowments; of incorporating the newly-emerged National Spiritual Assembly as well as all firmly grounded local spiritual assemblies; of obtaining recognition for the Bahá'í Marriage Certificate, as well as the Holy Days on which work is forbidden; of stimulating the conversion of both the Eskimos and American Indians, and of purchasing a plot of land to serve as the site for the future Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of Alaska. (Shoghi Effendi to Delegates and Visitors assembled at the Convention of the Bahá'ís of Alaska, April, 1957, *High Endeavours - Messages to Alaska*, #37, p. 31)

The beloved Guardian is very anxious to secure information as to the Indian tribes (native), which have been contacted by any of the believers in your area; or of course if there are any believers from these Tribes, that would be even more interesting. Can you prepare a list showing the number of Tribes that have been contacted, and of these Tribes, the number who have become believers? This would be very interesting information. Can you secure it at an early date and send it on to me for the beloved Guardian.

(Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, September 9, 1957 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Alaska, *High Endeavours - Messages to Alaska*, #52, p. 43)

He was pleased to learn the manner in which your Assembly and the Bahá'ís are undertaking this all-important task of teaching the Indians, the Eskimos and to the extent possible, the Aleuts. The Master has promised that very great results would be achieved when these people are given the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit, and therefore he hopes the friends will be able to bring it to them in increasing force and in increasing numbers. The Guardian will pray for you and for the success of your work. (Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, October 20, 1957 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Alaska, *High Endeavours - Messages to Alaska*, #54, p. 44)

He very deeply appreciates the contribution which you have made in behalf of the Eskimos of Alaska. Receipt there for is enclosed herewith. It is fitting that the Eskimos of Alaska be associated with the work of the Shrine of the Báb, and your having made this gift in their behalf is very appropriate, especially as you are endeavoring to work with the Eskimos in that country. ... The Guardian greatly values your sacrificial and devoted services to the Faith. He is praying in your behalf. He likewise will pray for the friends in Alaska, and also for those who are being attracted to the Faith, particularly Mr. English, who is half Eskimo.

The Guardian was deeply appreciative of the spirit which animated you in preparing the tape recording of the Ridván Feast held in the home of an Eskimo family in Fairbanks. (Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, December 13, 1953, to an individual, *High Endeavours - Messages to Alaska*, #64, p. 53)

Under whatever conditions, the dearly loved, the divinely sustained, the onward marching legions of the army of Bahá'u'lláh may be laboring, in whatever theatre they may operate, in whatever climes they may struggle, whether in the cold and inhospitable territories beyond the Arctic Circle, or in the torrid zones of both the Eastern and Western Hemispheres; on the borders of the jungles of Burma, Malaya and India; on the fringes of the deserts of Africa and of the Arabian Peninsula; in the lonely, far-away, backward and sparsely populated islands dotting the Atlantic, the Pacific and the Indian Oceans and the North Sea; amidst the diversified tribes of the Negroes of Africa, the Eskimos and the Lapps of the Arctic regions, the Mongolians of East and South East Asia, the Polynesians of the South Pacific Islands, the reservations of the Red Indians in both American continents, the Maoris of New Zealand, and the aborigines of Australia; within the time-honored strongholds of both Christianity and Islam, whether it be in Mecca, Rome, Cairo, Najaf or Karbila; or in towns and cities whose inhabitants are either immersed in crass



materialism, or breathe the fetid air of an aggressive racialism, or find themselves bound by the chains and fetters of a haughty intellectualism, or have fallen a prey to the forces of a blind and militant nationalism, or are steeped in the atmosphere of a narrow and intolerant ecclesiasticism -- to them all, as well as to those who, as the fortunes of this fate-laden Crusade prosper, will be called upon to unfurl the standard of an all-conquering Faith in the strongholds... (Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Bahá'í World 1950-1957*, p. 37)

The number of the European, the African, the Asiatic, and the American-Indian languages, including seven supplementary languages, into which Bahá'í literature has been, and is being translated, is over forty-two, raising the total number of the translations undertaken since the inception of the Faith to one hundred and thirty. (Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Bahá'í World 1950-1957*, pp. 61-62)

Contact has been established with no less than twenty-two American Indian tribes, raising the total number of tribes contacted throughout the Western Hemisphere to thirty-four. (Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Bahá'í World 1950-1957*, p. 62)

Of the seventy-two islands allocated to eleven Bahá'í National Assemblies no less than sixty-four have opened their doors to the vanguard of Bahá'í Crusaders, leaving Spitzbergen and Anticosti Island, situated respectively in the North Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean, Nicobar Islands, Cocos Island and Chagos Archipelago in the Indian Ocean, and Loyalty Islands, Sakhalin Island and Hainan Island in the Pacific Ocean --one of which is a native reserve, two of which are within the Soviet orbit, while four others are either privately owned or controlled by private companies -- as yet unopened by the heroic band battling for the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. (Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Bahá'í World 1950-1957*, p. 77)

The total number of American Indian tribes with which contact has been established has now reached twenty-two, whilst members of the Apache, the Cherokee, the Omaha, the Oneida, and the Sioux tribes have been enrolled in the American Bahá'í Community. (Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Bahá'í World 1950-1957*, p. 80)

The number of American Indian tribes with which contact has been established in the Western Hemisphere -- an achievement in which the members of this Community have played a leading role -- is now over forty-five. No less than eighteen American Indian tribes are now represented in the Bahá'í communities of that same hemisphere, mainly as a result of the assiduous endeavors exerted by the members of this Community. (Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Bahá'í World - 1950-1957*, p. 110)

The opening of the Sovereign states of Laos and of Cambodia and of the islands of Trinidad, of Corisco, of Fernando-Po, of Pemba and of Mafia; the acquisition of sites for the construction of the future Mother-Temples of Argentina, of Brazil and of Libya; the

sum recently allocated for the purchase of a site for the erection of the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of the British Isles; the launching of the twin far-reaching enterprises designed to culminate in the establishment of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs of Africa and of Australasia; the founding of Bahá'í Schools in the New Hebrides Islands, in Mentawai Islands and in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands; the establishment of Bahá'í burial grounds in Libya, Burma and Tanganyika; the formulation of supplementary plans by the newly emerged regional spiritual assemblies in Africa, and by the Bahá'í communities of the Seychelles and the Sudan; the acquisition of land for the Bahá'í summer schools of Egypt, of Iraq and of Chile; the establishment of Bahá'í endowments in the Aleutian Islands, in Swaziland, in Mentawai Islands, in Spanish Morocco, in Basutoland and in Liberia; the acquisition of local Hazíratu'l-Quds in Gambia, in the Aleutian Islands, in Uganda, in Spanish Morocco, in the British Cameroons, in Algeria and in French Morocco; the translation of Bahá'í literature into thirty-one African, seven American Indian, and twenty-eight miscellaneous languages; the purchase of Bahá'í historic sites in the City of Adrianople; the founding of an Indian Cultural Institute in Chichicastenango, Guatemala; the transfer of the remains of the Báb's infant son from a mosque in Shiraz to the Bahá'í burial ground in that city -- these proclaim, in no uncertain terms, the splendid initiative and the dynamic power of the faith of the bearers of the Gospel of the New Day, as well as their unyielding determination to exceed, by every means in their power, the bounds of their prescribed duties and responsibilities assumed under the Ten-Year Plan, and to enhance, through every channel open to them, and over as wide a range as their circumstances permit. (Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Bahá'í World 1950-1957*, pp. 115-116)

The number of settlements in Greenland provided with Bahá'í scriptures in the Greenlandic tongue has been raised to forty-eight, including Thule beyond the Arctic Circle and Etah near the 80th latitude, whilst Bahá'í literature in that same language has been dispatched as far north as the radio station at Brondlunsfjord, Pearyland, 82nd latitude, the northernmost outpost of the world. Representatives of thirty-one races and of twenty-four African tribes have been enrolled in the Bahá'í World Community. Contact has been established with the following seventeen minority groups and races: the Eskimos of Alaska and Greenland, the Lapps of Scandinavia, the Maoris of New Zealand, the Sea-Dayaks of Sarawak, the Polynesians of the Fiji Islands, the Cree Indians of Prairie Provinces, Canada, the Cherokee Indians in North Carolina, the Oneida Indians in Wisconsin, the Omaha Indians in Nebraska, the Seminole Indians in Florida, the Mexican Indians in Mexico, the Indians of the San Blas Islands, the Indians of Chichicastenango in Guatemala, the Mayans in Yucatan, the Patagonian Indians in Argentina, the Indians of La Paz in Bolivia and the Inca Indians in Peru. (Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Bahá'í World 1950-1957*, pp. 147-148)

Your loving letter of October 5 was duly received and its contents have been presented to the beloved Guardian. He was very happy indeed to learn of the very active manner in which the Canadian Bahá'ís have taken hold of this most important subject of teaching the Indians. He attaches the greatest importance to this matter as the Master has

spoken of the latent strength of character of these people and feels that when the Spirit of the Faith has a chance to work in their midst, it will produce remarkable results.

We are heartened at the prospect that from indigenous peoples of this vast oceanic area, the Ainu, the Japanese, the Chinese, the Koreans, the Okinawans, the Micronesians, the American Indians, the Eskimos, and the Aleuts vast numbers will soon enter the Faith. (The Universal House of Justice: Message to the North Pacific Oceanic Conference, Sapporo, Japan, September, 1971, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963-1986*, ¶100.4, p. 204)

The teaching work among the Indians of the northern lands of the Western Hemisphere has likewise borne rich fruit, as tribe upon tribe has been enlisted under the banner of Bahá'u'lláh.

Whether in Alaska's south-eastern islands and rugged mountains, or in Canada's huge Indian reserves from the west to the east, many Amerindian believers have arisen to serve the Cause, and through their joint efforts, their sacrificial endeavours and distinctive talents they bid fair to accelerate the dawn of the day when they will be so "illuminated as to enlighten the whole world." (The Universal House of Justice, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963 to 1986*, ¶172.3, p. 329)

EXEMPLARY SELF-SACRIFICING PROMOTER FAITH ACHIEVED BRILLIANT UNBLEMISHED RECORD CONSTANT SERVICE FOUNDED ON ROCK-LIKE STAUNCHNESS AND DEEP INSATIABLE LOVE FOR TEACHING WORK PARTICULARLY AMONG INDIAN AND BLACK MINORITIES WESTERN HEMISPHERE AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AFRICA. (The Universal House of Justice, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963 to 1986*, ¶326.1, pp. 541-542)

The representative character of the Bahá'í community should therefore be reinforced through the attraction, conversion and support of an ever-growing number of new believers from the diverse elements constituting the population of that vast mainland and particularly from among Indians and Eskimos about whose future the Master wrote in such glowing terms. (The Universal House of Justice, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963 to 1986*, ¶340.3, p. 561)

The number of American Indian tribes with which contact has been established now exceeds fifty, nearly twenty-five of which are now represented in the Faith. (Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, Ridván 1958, to Annual Bahá'í Conventions, *Ministry of the Custodians*, pp. 83-84)

...a marked acceleration in the process of enlisting in the ranks of the Faith an ever greater number of Indians, the original inhabitants of the Americas, of Eskimos in the far North, and of representatives of the Basque and Gypsy races in those areas assigned to the United States Bahá'í Community... (Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, May 1958, to the Hands of the Cause, members of their Auxiliary Boards, members of Regional and

National Spiritual Assemblies, pioneers, resident believers, and visitors attending the Intercontinental Conference in Chicago, May 1958, *Ministry of the Custodians*, p. 95)

Since the beginning of the World Crusade, contact has been established with nearly sixty Indian tribes in North, Central and South America, of which nearly thirty are now represented in the Faith. (Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, Riḍván 1959, to Annual Bahá'í Conventions, *Ministry of the Custodians*, p. 140)

The rapid spread of the Faith among the Indians of South America in recent months has rivaled the extraordinary progress made in the heart of the African continent and the islands of the Pacific, and may well foreshadow a parallel process of mass conversion in the New World. In Bolivia, a seven-fold increase in the number of Indian believers has occurred since last Riḍván bringing the total to over the one thousand mark, drawn from almost a hundred different localities. As many as twenty-five new all-Indian Local Spiritual Assemblies may be formed in this country alone during the current Riḍván period. Throughout the Americas contact has been established with more than sixty different tribes since the inception of the Crusade, evidence of the steady progress made in carrying the Teachings to these indigenous peoples to whose enrolment in the Faith both 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and our beloved Guardian attached such great importance. (Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, *Ministry of the Custodians*, p. 189)

She [Rúhíyyih Khánúm] spent some time with the Indians, from whom the Master confidently expected so much; John Robarts, also visited a number of Indian groups in the course of his mission in Canada. (Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, Riḍván 1960, to Annual Bahá'í Conventions, *Ministry of the Custodians*, p. 219)

An interesting feature has been the continued spread of the Faith amongst Indians in various parts of the Western Hemisphere, from the Far North where the Yukon's first Indian believer has been accepted, through Mexico, which has its first Indian believer, to Bolivia, where hundreds of the Indians in the Andes have embraced the Faith. A start has been made in teaching the Carib Indians of the West Indies in Dominica. (Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, July 21, 1960, to all National Spiritual Assemblies, *Ministry of the Custodians*, p. 220)

Heroes and martyrs, individuals drawn from every stratum of society, old people and young children, representatives of not only the Asiatic and European civilizations, but Africans, American Indians, Pacific Islanders and Eskimos, have swelled the ranks of pioneers, each in his own way and in his own part of the world, contributing to this glorious testimonial of belief in the Manifestation of God in this day. (Rúhíyyih et al., November 2, 1960, Conclave Message to the Bahá'ís of East and West, *Ministry of the Custodians*, p. 238)

The initial evidences of that great wave of mass conversion which must sweep the planet have been seen through the enrolment, since the inception of the Crusade, amongst the Africans, the people of Indonesia, and the Indians of South America, of over 30,000 believers, almost 20,000 of whom have embraced the Faith since the passing of the beloved of our hearts;. (Rúhíyyih et al., November 2, 1960, Conclave Message to the Bahá'ís of East and West, *Ministry of the Custodians*, p. 238)

Rahmatu'lláh Muhájir will travel across Africa, and later make a prolonged tour among the Bolivian Indians. (Rúhíyyih et al., November 2, 1960, Conclave Message to the Bahá'ís of East and West, *Ministry of the Custodians*, p. 242)

It is our ardent hope that our Bahá'í brothers and sisters in Africa and the Pacific area, in the Andes, in the jungles and the deserts, on the Indian reservations of North America, in distant wastelands, and the regions of the Arctic Circle will, as a symbol of our great brotherhood and our unity under the banner of the Blessed Perfection, likewise contribute regularly, if only one penny, to further the achievement of the remaining goals of our beloved Guardian's Crusade and to enable us to win a victory in 1963 such as has never been recorded in the annals of any religion in the memory of man. (Rúhíyyih et al., November 2, 1960, Conclave Message to the Bahá'ís of East and West, *Ministry of the Custodians*, pp. 243-244)

In conjunction with the extraordinary progress which has taken place in the spread and consolidation of the Faith throughout the Western Hemisphere during the last few years, a less conspicuous but equally important advance can be seen in a field to which both the Master and the Guardian attached the highest significance. Almost half a century ago 'Abdu'l-Bahá instructed the believers in the United States and Canada to "attach great importance to the ... original inhabitants of America", promising that the Indians, like the original inhabitants of Arabia who accepted and supported Muhammad would, when educated and guided, "become so enlightened that the whole earth will be illumined The nineteenth objective of that portion of the World Crusade entrusted in 1953 to the American Bahá'í Community by its Guardian was the "conversion to the Faith of members of the leading Indian tribes." At a steadily accelerating pace this immensely significant process of conversion has gone on until at the present time we are witnesses of an event of extraordinary historic importance, the election in Bolivia of a National Bahá'í Assembly representative of a community the vast majority of whom belong to the Aymara race. No less than thirteen hundred of these Indians, in over one hundred localities have, with enthusiasm and conviction, embraced the Faith and are responsible for the formation during this present Riḍván of over twenty Local Assemblies, thus directly fulfilling the expressed wish of the Guardian that the Indians be elected to the councils of the Faith and lend their support to its administrative activities.

The establishment of Indian Assemblies in Ecuador, Guatemala and Mexico -- areas which were the scene of such mighty pre-Colombian civilizations as those of the Incas, the Mayas, and the Aztecs; the formation of no less than four Assemblies representa-

tive of Canadian Indians in the Yukon, Alberta and Saskatchewan; the fact that there are now over forty Indian and Eskimo tribes represented in the Bahá'í Community throughout the Western Hemisphere -- more than double the number in 1957 -- all testify that the devoted followers of Bahá'u'lláh, in both the East and the West, are mindful of the tremendously significant words of their beloved Guardian at the inception of the World Crusade, and are devoting special attention to the teaching work in these infinitely fertile fields. (Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, Riḍván 1961, to all Annual Bahá'í Conventions, *Ministry of the Custodians*, p. 270)

Now is the auspicious moment for the members of these new national communities "whose motherlands have been chosen", as Shoghi Effendi wrote, "as the scene of the earliest victories won by the prosecutors of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Divine Plan" -- to arise and teach as never before. Let them recall the wonderful appeal the Guardian addressed to them: "Theirs is the opportunity, if they but seize it, to adorn the opening pages of the annals of the second Bahá'í century with a tale of deeds approaching in valour those with which their Persian brethren have illuminated the opening years of the first, and comparable with the exploits more recently achieved by their North American fellow-believers, and which have shed such lustre on the closing decade of that same century." These communities have now entered the period of "strenuous and organized labours" the Guardian spoke of, "by which future generations of believers in the Latin countries must distinguish themselves" in that period when, as he said, 66 native Latin American traveling teachers" will arise "who, as the mighty task progresses, must increasingly bear the brunt of responsibility for the propagation of the Faith in their homelands."

A bright picture stretches before the eyes of the believers in the New World and the harvest, in many places, stands ready for the garner's hand. The greatest possibilities for mass conversion at the present time are undoubtedly amongst the Indian tribes. As long ago as 1947 the Guardian wrote that particular attention should be directed to the "various Indian tribes, the aboriginal inhabitants of the Latin republics, whom the Author of the Tablets of the Divine Plan has compared to the 'ancient inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula'". He then quoted the wonderful words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá regarding them: "Attach great importance to the indigenous population of America. For these souls may be likened unto the ancient inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula, who, prior to the Mission of Muhammad, were like unto savages. When the light of Muhammad shone forth in their midst, however, they became so radiant as to illumine the world. Likewise, these Indians, should they be educated and guided, there can be no doubt that they will become so Illumined as to enlighten the whole world."

How grateful all those believers must be who were in any way responsible for the beginning of this process of mass conversion among the Indians, which had already started during the lifetime of the beloved Guardian. What joy it brought him, with what enthusiasm he hailed the formation of the first all-Indian Local Assembly, how dear to his heart was the first Indian Institute at Chichicastenango, how frequently he spoke to pilgrims from East and West of the importance of this work and the progress it was making, and how carefully he noted in his records the names of the tribes enrolled in the Faith and

the native languages into which Bahá'í literature had been translated. In his own words he clearly indicated for the believers of Latin America the manner in which he wished them to proceed in this all-important teaching field and clearly set forth the role he wished the new Indian Bahá'ís to play in both the administrative and teaching work of the Faith. "A special effort should be exerted to secure the unqualified adherence of members of some of these tribes to the Faith, their subsequent election to its councils, and their unreserved support of the organized attempts that will have to be made in the future by the projected National Assemblies for the large-scale conversion of Indian races to the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. (Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, Ridván 1961, to those gathered for the Election of the 21 Independent Latin American National Spiritual Assemblies, *Ministry of the Custodians*, pp. 280-281)

IMPELLED SHARE RECENT EVIDENCE VITALITY RAPID EXPANSION  
CONSOLIDATION BELOVED FAITH STOP TWENTY-ONE LATIN AMERICAN  
NATIONAL BODIES SUCCESSFULLY FORMED RAISING TOTAL NUMBER  
FORTY-EIGHT THROUGHOUT BAHAI WORLD STOP FORMATION ALL  
EUROPEAN GOAL ASSEMBLIES INCLUDING ONE EXTRA HOLLAND  
DENMARK SPAIN EIGHT NEW ASSEMBLIES CEYLON NOW CONSTITUTES  
FIRM FOUNDATION ELECTION NEXT RIDVAN TWELVE INDEPENDENT  
NATIONAL BODIES FUTURE PILLARS UNIVERSAL HOUSE JUSTICE STOP  
MASS CONVERSION STIPULATED LAST MESSAGE BELOVED GUARDIAN  
ESSENTIAL FEATURE SECOND HALF CRUSADE STEADILY GAINING  
MOMENTUM AFRICA INDIA SOUTH AMERICA STOP CENTRAL EAST AFRICA  
MEMBERSHIP INCREASED THREE THOUSAND SINCE MARCH STOP PAST  
FOUR MONTHS SEVENTEEN HUNDRED NEW BELIEVERS ENROLLED UJAIN  
DISTRICT INDIA STOP BOLIVIAN COMMUNITY NOW BOASTS FIFTEEN  
HUNDRED INDIAN BAHAIS TWENTY-FIVE LOCAL ASSEMBLIES LARGELY  
INDIAN MEMBERSHIP STOP CHAD RECENTLY OPENED FAITH RAISING  
COUNTRIES ILLUMINED REVELATION BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, TWO HUNDRED FIF-  
TY-EIGHT STOP CONSTANT EVIDENCES GRACE BLESSED PERFECTION RE-  
ALIZATION DIVINE PLAN CENTRE COVENANT SUSTAINING INSPIRATION  
BELOVED GUARDIAN UPLIFT ALL HEARTS INSPIRE EVERY BELIEVER RE-  
NEWED EFFORT DETERMINATION WIN ALL GOALS STOP INVITE FRIENDS  
JOIN PRAYERS THANKSGIVING SUPPLICATION STILL GREATER VICTORIES  
STOP AIRMAIL COPY HANDS NATIONAL ASSEMBLIES. (Handsfaith, May 28,  
1961, Cable to Bahá'í Wilmette, *Ministry of the Custodians*, p. 284)

In Bolivia, they now have over 1,500 Indian Bahá'ís in over 153 centres with 25 Local Assemblies.

For the first time in the history of North America, Indians in Canada are beginning to enter the Faith; 3 Spiritual Assemblies were formed on Indian reserves there, and the chairmen of two of these Assemblies attended the Canadian Convention and fired the friends with enthusiasm for bringing the Message to their people. (Hands of the Cause in

the Holy Land, July 8, 1961, to the Hands of the Cause of God, *Ministry of the Custodians*, p. 293)

Muhájir is on his way to the Philippines to assist them in intensive teaching work in those islands, following a period of great activity amongst the Indians in Bolivia and the Central American area. (Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, July 8, 1961, to the Hands of the Cause of God, *Ministry of the Custodians* p. 294)

We have been delighted to hear the news of the increasing success of the work among the dear Indian believers in so many parts of Latin America, and in other areas where beginning efforts are being made toward mass conversion. (Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, August 3, 1961, to All 21 Latin American National Spiritual Assemblies, *Ministry of the Custodians*, p. 299)

However, with the election of the Universal House of Justice less than two years away, we feel confident that your National Assembly will recognize the vital and absolute need for maintaining the existing Local Spiritual Assemblies with a strong nucleus, and not jeopardize these prizes which have been won at such cost by removing the pioneers who were sent there to assure the winning of these goals, even to conquer the new Indian areas or other areas of mass conversion. (Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, August 3, 1961, to All 21 Latin American National Spiritual Assemblies, *Ministry of the Custodians*, p. 299)

One of the Peruvian friends plans to carry the Faith to the primitive people of Peru in the jungle area beyond the Andes.

The National Spiritual Assembly of Nicaragua has informed us of the acceptance of the Faith by three villages in the Indian area of that country.

Bolivia reports 350 new believers since Riḍván, bringing their total to 2,000. (Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, August 12, 1961, to the Hands of the Cause of God, *Ministry of the Custodians*, p. 302)

...Twenty souls from the Carib tribe have embraced the Faith in Honduras.

Ecuador has risen above the threat of the enemies of the Faith and presents a "new face" of victory. The National Assembly reports loving, dedicated meetings of their body directed to the primary task of the spiritual conquest of the country. In Carabuela we have four new Indian believers. This is the third Indian village with new believers, and the second village to be conquered for our Faith since the Convention. Already they have surpassed the total number who accepted the Faith in Ecuador during the whole of the past year. (Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, September 5, 1961, to the Hands of the Cause of God, *Ministry of the Custodians*, p. 305)

There is still more news to gladden every faithful heart. Mass conversion continues in India, goes steadily on in Africa, leaps forward in Bolivia, and each day brings



fresh numbers of North and South American Indians into the advancing ranks of our blessed Faith. (Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, September 5, 1961, to the Hands of the Cause of God, *Ministry of the Custodians*, p. 306)

Ecuador reports a very successful teaching conference with the participation of newly-declared Indian believers. Numbers have steadily increased there. In Canada the acceleration in teaching which began last year encouragingly continues. Centres and groups have been established on more Indian reservations. The National Spiritual Assembly of Canada writes that Bahá'í marriage is now recognized by the Province of Ontario. It further writes that, "Our new enrolments now number 192 on the home front and thirty-five in the Yukon. Many of these are Indians coming mainly from Alberta and Saskatchewan." (Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, December 27, 1961, to the Hands of the Cause of God, *Ministry of the Custodians*, p. 329)

In Latin America, the area where such an outstanding victory was achieved last year by the formation of no less than twenty-one new pillars of the Universal House of Justice, the work of the Faith is progressing in all fields, under the aegis of these new national bodies, and rapid progress is being made in consolidating the communities within its borders and in carrying the Faith to the Indians, "the original inhabitants of America" mentioned by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the Tablets of the Divine Plan, who are entering the Cause in great numbers. No less than sixty-two different Indian tribes are now represented in the Bahá'í communities of North, Central and South America, nearly four times the number mentioned by Shoghi Effendi five years ago in his *Riḍván* Message of 1957.

The Bolivian community, which a year ago had already fired the imagination of the Bahá'í world by the extraordinary progress made in attracting new adherents from the ranks of the Indian population, now has nearly four thousand believers, a gain of more than twenty-five hundred since last *Riḍván*. Latest reports indicate that as many as sixty Local Assemblies may be formed this year. Already these original inhabitants of Bolivia are arising to carry the flame of the Faith to neighbouring republics; recently, as a result of the devoted efforts of these pioneers, the rising tide of new enrollments amongst the descendants of an ancient American civilization has been extended to Peru and also to Chile where, during the last two months, nearly two hundred Indians have entered the Faith, representing the first conversions on such a scale in that country.

In Panama, where nearly three hundred Indian believers have been enrolled in recent months, the number of Assemblies will be doubled this year. In Mexico and Costa Rica, the past year has witnessed in the former a doubling of the number of believers comprising the national community, while the latter, as a result of a new wave of teaching activity on the part of its native believers, anticipates tripling this *Riḍván* the number of Local Assemblies existing a year ago. (Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, *Riḍván* message, 1962, to Annual Bahá'í Conventions, *Ministry of the Custodians*, pp. 343-344)

...SIXTY TWO LOCAL ASSEMBLIES FORMED BOLIVIA FOCAL POINT  
MASS CONVERSION LATIN AMERICA STOP TWO HUNDRED NEW INDIAN

BELIEVERS RECENTLY ENROLLED CHILE STOP NICARAGUA PANAMA RESPECTIVELY REPORT TRIPLING QUADRUPLING BELIEVERS LAST YEAR WITH INDIAN ENROLLMENTS NUMBERING SEVERAL HUNDRED STOP URGE ALL NATIONAL BODIES SEIZE OPPORTUNITY FORM ADDITIONAL LOCAL ASSEMBLIES ANY TIME PRESENT YEAR ENSURE STILL GREATER INCREASE AVOWED SUPPORTERS GROUPS ASSEMBLIES ERE TERMINATION SACRED GLOBAL PLAN ENTRUSTED BELOVED GUARDIAN COMMUNITY MOST GREAT NAME STOP AIRMAIL MESSAGE HANDS NATIONAL ASSEMBLIES. (Handsfaith, May 11, 1962, Cable to Bahá'í Wilmette, *Ministry of the Custodians*, p. 361)

The teaching victories continue also in the Indian sub-continent, Africa and Bolivia. (Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, September 7, 1962, to the Hands of the Cause of God, *Ministry of the Custodians*, p. 372)

There were 115 new believers among the San Blas Indians in Panama during the past month. One entire island of the San Blas group, named Islapino, has been conquered for the Faith, and four new Indian areas have been opened up there. The first Indian community in Argentina has been enrolled in the Faith across the border from Bolivia. The first all-Indian Local Assembly of Brazil was established in Logoa Grande. (Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, September 26, 1962, to the Hands of the Cause of God, *Ministry of the Custodians*, p. 374)

There is also wonderful news of great teaching and administrative strides in Costa Rica. They have progressed from 3 Local Spiritual Assemblies at the start of the Crusade to 8 in 1961, and in the past year they tripled this number to 24 Local Spiritual Assemblies, 8 of which Local Assemblies are in the fertile Indian regions.

Equally as thrilling, in view of the long years during which this project was unsuccessful in taking hold, is the news from the United States that there are now 66 Navajo Indians in one area who have accepted the Faith; 51 of them have enrolled during the past three months. (Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, October 10, 1962, to the Hands of the Cause of God, *Ministry of the Custodians*, p. 377)

It was in November, 1951, that the beloved Guardian disclosed to our eyes the significance of the event we shall so shortly be celebrating throughout the Bahá'í world when he cabled that the first four Intercontinental Conferences scheduled to be held during the Holy Year were a "prelude to Most Great Jubilee which will alike commemorate Centenary formal assumption by Author of Bahá'í Revelation of His Prophetic Office and mark God willing world-wide establishment Faith forecast by Centre of Covenant in His Tablets and prophesied by Daniel in His Book thus paving way for advent of Golden Age destined witness world recognition universal proclamation ultimate triumph of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh." He said those Conferences marked the "inauguration beyond limits of World Centre of the Faith of intercontinental stage of Bahá'í activity . . .", and pointed out to us in glowing words that the "earthly symbols of Bahá'u'lláh's unearthly Sovereignty

must needs, ere the decade separating the two memorable Jubilees draws to a close, be raised as far north as Franklin beyond the Arctic Circle and as far south as the Falkland Islands, marking the southern extremity of the Western Hemisphere, amidst the remote, lonely, inhospitable islands and archipelagos of the South Pacific, the Indian and Atlantic Oceans, the mountains of Tibet, the jungles of Africa, the deserts of Arabia, the steppes of Russia, the Indian Reservations of North America, the wastelands of Siberia and Mongolia, amongst the Eskimos of Greenland and Alaska, the Negroes of Africa, the Buddhist strongholds in the heart of Asia, amongst Lapps of Finland, the Polynesians of the South Sea Islands, Negritos of the archipelagos of the South Pacific Ocean." (Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, October 31, 1962, to the Bahá'ís of East and West, *Ministry of the Custodians*, pp. 380-381)

Hearts filled profound gratitude rejoice announce inauguration third phase Nine Year Plan through successful consummation six intercontinental conferences attended by 9,200 believers including nearly all Hands Cause large number Board members representatives almost all National Assemblies Bahá'í world over 140 territories and host Asian African American Indian tribes... (Universal House of Justice, *Wellspring of Guidance*, p.122; Also in , *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963-1986*, ¶47.2, p.114). Note: in the 1963-1986 collection the words American Indian are replaced by Amerindian, and the words "national assemblies" are capitalized.

We cherish the hope that at this final Conference the friends will arise with enthusiasm and determination not only to win the remaining goals of the Plan but to carry out Shoghi Effendi's injunction to win the allegiance of members of the various tribes of American Indians to the Cause, thereby hastening the period prophesied by the Master when the Indian peoples of America would become a source of spiritual illumination to the world. (Universal House of Justice, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963 to 1986*, ¶187.6, p. 356)

To the Beloved of God gathered in the Conference called on the occasion of the Dedication of the Mother Temple of Latin America

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

With praise and gratitude to God the whole Bahá'í world acclaim the dedication of the Mother Temple of Latin America, an edifice which glorifies the Cause of Bahá'u'l-láh at that point where, the beloved Master asserted, "the Occident and the Orient find each other united through the Panama Canal," where "the teachings, once established ..., will unite the East and the West, the North and the South."

This historic project, in a hemisphere of infinite spiritual potentiality, fulfills one of the most important goals of the Nine Year Plan, and brings untold joy to the hearts of the friends in every land. Privileged are they who shared in the raising of this glorious Silent Teacher with deeds of loving generosity and sacrifice. A crown to the labors of all

those who have striven to establish the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh in Latin America, this Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, the rallying point for the Bahá'ís of those lands, whether they are of the blessed Indian peoples or represent the other races whose diversity enriches the nations of that hemisphere, will be a fountainhead of spiritual confirmations, and this mighty achievement will endow the Bahá'í Community with new and greater capacities, enabling the friends in Latin America, and particularly in this privileged land of Panama, to win victories that will eclipse all their past achievements. ... (The Universal House of Justice, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1968-1973*, pp. 86-87; Also in *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963-1986*, #108, pp. 210-211)

...a marked acceleration in the process of enlisting in the ranks of the Faith an ever greater number of Indians, the original inhabitants of the Americas, of Eskimos in the far North... (Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, May 1958, to the Hands of the Cause, members of their Auxiliary Boards, members of Regional and National Spiritual Assemblies, pioneers, resident believers, and visitors attending the Intercontinental Conference in Chicago, May 1958, *Ministry of the Custodians* p. 95)

## **IX. Should Receive Special Attention, Love, and Consideration**

The greatest care should be exercised to attract the attention, and win the support of other minorities in that land, such as the Indians, the Eskimos, the Doukhobors [sic] and the Negroes, thereby reinforcing the representative character of a rapidly developing community. (Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, p. 11)

The initial contact with the Indians should be developed with assiduous care and unflinching patience... (Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, p. 17)

He would not advise you to teach them Esperanto, as we have no way of knowing whether it will ultimately be chosen as the auxiliary language of the world. He thinks the most direct and quickest way of communicating with them in a common tongue should be chosen; in other words either you should learn their language or they yours, whichever will yield the quickest results.

As they are a relatively uncivilized people, unused to the modern cosmopolitan forms of life, and consequently not au courant with the thoughts which to us have become mere commonplace, he would advise you to approach them through love, friendliness, and association, until you are in a position to enter into their confidence, and gradually teach them, in a simple way, the great truths of our Faith. (Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, December 12th, 1942, *High Endeavours - Messages to Alaska*, #4, p. 6)

The Friends should bear in mind that in our Faith, unlike every other society, the minority, to compensate for what might be treated as an inferior status, receives special attention, love and consideration. (Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, *A Special Meas-*

*ure of Love*, pp. 19-20; Also in *Developing Distinctive Bahá'í Communities Guidelines for Spiritual Assemblies*, p 7.52)

Shoghi Effendi is also most anxious for the Message to reach the aboriginal inhabitants of the Americas. These people for the most part downtrodden and ignorant should receive from the Bahá'ís a special measure of love, and every effort be made to teach them. Their enrollment in the Faith will enrich them and us and demonstrate our principle of the Oneness of Man far better than words or the wide conversion of the ruling races ever can. (Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Me-so-America and the Antilles, July 11, 1951; in *A Special Measure of Love*, p. 5; Also in *Lights of Guidance*, #1775, p. 523)

## **X. Establish all-American Indian Assemblies**

First all red Indian Assembly consolidated at Macy, Nebraska. (Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, p. 72)

He was particularly happy to see that some of the Indian believers were present at the Convention... 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself has stated how great are their potentialities, and it is their right, and the duty of the non-Indian Bahá'ís to see that they receive the Message of God for this Day. One of the most worthy objectives of your Assembly must be the establishment of all-Indian Spiritual Assemblies... (Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, *A Special Measure of Love*, pp. 19-20; Also in *Developing Distinctive Bahá'í Communities Guidelines for Spiritual Assemblies*, p 7.52)

The first all-Indian Local Spiritual Assembly in South America has been formed in Huanuni, Bolivia. (Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, Riḍván 1958, to Annual Bahá'í Conventions, *Ministry of the Custodians*, p. 84)

The steady advancement in this field, to which the beloved Guardian attached so much importance, is evinced by the formation of the second all-Indian Local Spiritual Assembly in South America last Riḍván in Vilcollo, Bolivia. (Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, Riḍván 1959, to Annual Bahá'í Conventions, *Ministry of the Custodians*, p. 140)

The third all-American Indian Bahá'í Assembly was formed last April in Bolivia, and since then many hundreds of Indians have entered the Faith -- outstanding steps toward fulfilment of one of the dearest hopes of the beloved Guardian, who urged the friends on many occasions to remember the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in the Divine Plan, that if the original inhabitants of America accepted the Faith they would become as enkindled as the original inhabitants of Arabia who accepted the Prophet Muhammad. (Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, February 11, 1960, *Ministry of the Custodians*, p. 181)

What joy it brought him, with what enthusiasm he hailed the formation of the first all-Indian Local Assembly, how dear to his heart was the first Indian Institute at Chichicastenango, how frequently he spoke to pilgrims from East and West of the importance of this work and the progress it was making, and how carefully he noted in his records the names of the tribes enrolled in the Faith and the native languages into which Bahá'í literature had been translated. (Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, Riḍván 1961, to those gathered for the Election of the 21 Independent Latin American National Spiritual Assemblies, *Ministry of the Custodians*, p. 281)

## **XI. Translation and Publication of Bahá'í Literature in American Indian Languages**

*Eighteenth*, the translation of Bahá'í literature into ten languages in Europe, (Basque, Estonian, Flemish, Lapp, Maltese, Piedmontese, Romani, Romansch, Yiddish and Ziryen; ten in America: Aguaruna, Arawak, Blackfoot, Cherokee, Iroquois, Lengua, Mataco, Maya, Mexican and Yahgan.

*Nineteenth*, the conversion to the Faith of members of the leading Indian tribes. (Shoghi Effendi, *The Citadel of Faith*, p. 108)

The translation and publication of Bahá'í literature in the European and American Indian languages, allocated to your Assembly and its European Teaching Committee under the provisions of the Ten-Year Plan, is yet another objective of this second phase of this World Crusade, a task that must be resolutely pursued and speedily consummated in order to facilitate the intensive teaching activity which, at a later stage, must be conducted for the purpose of converting a considerable number of the minority races in both Europe and America to the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. (Shoghi Effendi, *The Citadel of Faith*, p. 129)

A wider dispersal throughout the length and breadth of its homeland; a more strenuous effort to consolidate its superb achievements in the newly opened virgin territories in various continents and islands of the globe; a still greater exertion to expedite the translation and publication of Bahá'í literature into the European and American Indian languages assigned to it under the Plan... (Shoghi Effendi, *The Citadel of Faith*, pp. 136-137)

The number of the European, the African, the Asiatic, and the American-Indian languages, including seven supplementary languages, into which Bahá'í literature has been, and is being translated, is over forty-two, raising the total number of the translations undertaken since the inception of the Faith to one hundred and thirty. (Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Bahá'í World 1950-1957* pp. 61-62)

The total number of the European, the African, the Asiatic and American-Indian languages into which Bahá'í literature has been and is being translated is one hundred and sixty-seven, of which fifty-five are among those included in the provisions of the Ten-Year Plan, and twenty-four are supplementary languages into which the translation of Bahá'í literature has been spontaneously undertaken by the indefatigable band of pioneers and new converts in Africa, in South East Asia, in the South Pacific Islands and in the Antipodes. (Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Bahá'í World 1950-1957*, p. 78)

He considers it would be a great service to the Faith if you can arrange to have some of the literature translated into other of the more widely used dialects, and especially Aleut. ...

The Guardian greatly values the services of your Committee in their devoted efforts to bring the Faith to the native people of Alaska, and assures you of his prayers for the abundant success of your labours. (Shoghi Effendi to the Northern Peoples Teaching Committee, July 1, 1955, *High Endeavours - Messages to Alaska*, #21, p. 23)

He was also delighted to hear Mr. Oliver is anxious to translate some of the Writings into Eskimo; please assure him this would be rendering both the Eskimos and the Cause a great service. If anything is printed in that language the Guardian would like to receive copies for the libraries here.

P.S. -- If Mr. Oliver would begin by translating even a small pamphlet into Eskimo at once this would be a much appreciated service. Please send him some printed copies as soon as available. Please assure this dear friend that his service is highly meritorious. (Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, July 30, 1946, *High Endeavours - Messages to Alaska*, #56, p. 47]

P.S. I should also say the beloved Guardian appreciated very much the Eskimo things. (Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, March 18, 1952, *High Endeavours - Messages to Alaska*, #60, p. 50)

The Eskimo booklet which you submitted for his approval he feels should be submitted to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States for their review. The reason for this is that they are closely in touch with the teaching work, and therefore well qualified to decide just what should and what should not be included in such a pamphlet. ...

The Guardian is extremely anxious that the Eskimos be brought into the Faith. He values very highly indeed the very wonderful services rendered by Mrs. Wells. He feels that she has sacrificed very deeply in order to carry the light of guidance to the seeking peoples of the world, particularly in Alaska, and now with the Eskimos. You may be sure the Guardian will pray for her spiritual success and her spiritual happiness.

...

The Guardian has communicated with the National Spiritual Assembly with regard to the efforts being made by yourself and Mrs. Wells as well as others in connection with

the introduction of the Faith amongst the Eskimos, asking them to render every possible assistance to this most important work. It is impossible to let you know how important the Guardian feels the introduction of the Faith amongst the Eskimos is at this particular time.

P.S. -- The draft of your pamphlet is being sent direct to the National Spiritual Assembly. (Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual, March 29, 1953, *High Endeavours - Messages to Alaska*, #62, pp. 51-52)

So far as the publication of the pamphlet in Eskimo is concerned, it probably would be advisable for you to write the National Assembly on this important matter, asking them what the present status is, and if you can assist in any way. (Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, April 12, 1954, *High Endeavours - Messages to Alaska*, #68, p. 57)

Another achievement during the past year of the Canadian friends has been the publication of literature in Ukrainian and in some of the Indian languages. He feels sure that this will speed up their teaching work immensely amongst both of these minorities; and he hopes that more of the Bahá'ís will make a special effort to get jobs in the reservations or amongst Indian people, so that they can carry to them the Message of Bahá'u'lláh. (Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, June 26, 1956, *Messages to Canada*, 1965 edition, p. 58; Also in 1999 edition, p. 239)

## **XII. Congress and Conferences**

He was particularly happy to see that some of the Indian believers were present at the Convention. He attaches the greatest importance to teaching the original inhabitants of the Americas the Faith. 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself has stated how great are their potentialities, and it is their right, and the duty of the non-Indian Bahá'ís, to see that they receive the Message of God for this Day. One of the most worthy objectives of your Assembly must be the establishment of all-Indian Spiritual Assemblies... (Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, *A Special Measure of Love*, pp. 19-20; Also in *Developing Distinctive Bahá'í Communities*, pp. 7.51-7.52)

...the first American Indian Teaching Conference in Northern Arizona; the American Indian Teaching Conference in Los Angeles, California; the Alaskan Teaching Conference in Fairbanks; the Hawaii-wide Teaching Conference in Honolulu; the Western Canada Summer Conference in Banff; the Maritime Teaching Conference in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island; the Teaching Conference in Beaulac, Canada; ... the first Colombian Teaching Conference in Bogota; the Peruvian Teaching Conference in Lima; the first Mexican Teaching Conference in Mexico City; ... the Honduran Teaching Conference in Honduras; the Guatemalan Teaching Conference in Guatemala; ... the El Salvador Teaching Conference in Santa Ana; the Nicaraguan Teaching Conference in Managua; the Costa Rican Teaching Conference in San Jose; the Panamanian Teaching Conference in Panama City; the Annual Study Institute of Brazil in Rezende; ... as well as a



large number of similar conferences and institutes too numerous to mention held throughout the United States of America. (Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Bahá'í World 1950-1957*, p. 114)

There are two matters in connection with the Congress which we would like you to immediately convey to the Congress Arrangements Committee: During the first session, all Hands of the Cause and the members of the Universal House of Justice will sit on the platform. During the remaining sessions the Hands, their wives and the companion of Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum, will occupy front row centre seats facing the platform; if space in the centre is insufficient, then two or more rows can be reserved for their use. Although we neither know if all the members of the Universal House of Justice will be present or where they would wish to be seated, we feel extra seats should be included in this block for them and for their wives, in case they desire to use them.

The Hands will arrange the devotional readings and readers for the opening session of the Congress on Sunday afternoon, the entire program of the Feast of Ridván, and the readings at the closing devotional session on May 2nd in the afternoon. However, the prayers for all other sessions, and those who are selected to read them, are left to the discretion of either your Committee or a sub-committee which you may wish to appoint.

We have laid down our policy for these prayers which we request, be strictly adhered to: Prayers will be read at the opening and closing of every session. No prayers will be read at the time of the fifteen minute interval. The total time allotted for these readings is fifteen to twenty minutes. All sessions are carefully arranged as regards time allowed, chairman and speakers. It is therefore very important that the readers' prayers are approved beforehand by the Committee in order to be sure each person will read only a short prayer. If it is left to the individual's judgment, some very long prayer in a foreign language may be read and spoil the presentation of the different subjects the speakers have been asked to address the Congress on. There can be as many as three readers if so desired in each session.

It is our desire to have as many of the different ethnic groups present at the Congress read these prayers as possible. No Persian or Arabic prayers or readers should be arranged for these sessions, as they have already been amply provided for in the other sessions of the program. The major emphasis in choosing readers should be among those who belong to the tribes and races enrolled during the World Crusade rather than those ethnic groups of Europe. We give you below a sample program just by way of information. We leave the last choice of readers and languages and order on the program to you.

Monday Morning  
Opening Prayer in Tongan  
Prayer in Gujrati, or Hindi, etc.  
Closing Prayer in Finnish  
Monday Afternoon  
Opening Prayer in Quechua  
Closing Prayer in Samoan

Prayer in English read by an African  
Tuesday Morning  
Opening Prayer in African language read by an African  
Prayer in Finnish  
Closing Prayer in Chinese  
Tuesday Afternoon  
Opening Prayer in Korean (Bill Smits' wife is Korean)  
Prayer in English read by some other race  
Closing Prayer in Canadian Indian language  
Wednesday Morning  
Opening Prayer in Indonesian  
Prayer in African language by African  
Closing Prayer in Japanese by Japanese  
Wednesday Afternoon  
Opening Prayer in Vietnamese by native  
Prayer in English read by another race  
Closing Prayer in Malayan, or some other South East Asian language  
Thursday Morning  
Opening Prayer in Lapp or Gypsy if possible  
Prayer in English by another race  
Closing Prayer in Navajo or other Indian language  
(Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, Ministry of the Custodians, pp. 421-423)

### **XIII. Teaching Indians through Radio Programming**

He was particularly pleased to hear of the weekly radio broadcasts you are giving, and feels that this cannot but have a marked effect on the progress of the Cause in Alaska, both visibly and spiritually.

Although there are many souls ripe to receive the message, there are many others who, though they are not able to recognize its import at present, will take the seed into their hearts, and there it will ultimately germinate. Radio reaches so many people and thus is of the utmost importance.

It was very kind of you to think of sending gifts to the Guardian made by Eskimos, and he will value them as tokens of your love and the handiwork of a people whom he is most anxious should receive the Divine Message.

He hopes that your Assembly will endeavour to reach the Eskimos with the Message; he fully realizes how difficult a task this is, but it is also one of great importance. If but one of these souls should become truly enkindled, he or she could then teach others in their own language and a manner suited to their minds. (Shoghi Effendi to the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Anchorage, November 19th, 1945, *High Endeavours - Messages to Alaska*, #7, p. 13)

The evaluation points to many things to be done, but particularly confirms the soundness of the concepts of broadcasting introduced by Counsellor Raul Pavon, along with his perception of how to meet the ideological and community needs of the campesinos, including the legion of Indian Bahá'ís. ... You are urged to take all steps to realize the great teaching, proclamation and consolidation possibilities in Otavalo, so that you may successfully reach both the Indian and non-Indian populations of the region. (Written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador, 01/03/1984, *Guidance for Bahá'í Radio*, p. 1, [http://www.bahai-library.net/english/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=131:guidance-for-bahai-radio&catid=6:bahai-compilations&Itemid=7](http://www.bahai-library.net/english/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=131:guidance-for-bahai-radio&catid=6:bahai-compilations&Itemid=7))

You are urged to take all steps to realize the great teaching, proclamation and consolidation possibilities in Otavalo, so that you may successfully reach both the Indian and non-Indian populations of the region." (Written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador, 05/08/1985, *Guidance for Bahá'í Radio*, p 35, [http://www.bahai-library.net/english/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=131:guidance-for-bahai-radio&catid=6:bahai-compilations&Itemid=7](http://www.bahai-library.net/english/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=131:guidance-for-bahai-radio&catid=6:bahai-compilations&Itemid=7))

#### Teamwork in Disaster Relief Services

Your letter of 10 June 1989 to the Universal House of Justice regarding the plight of the Pehuenches of the Mapuche zone has been received, and we are asked to convey its response to this volcano-produced local disaster."

...

Kindly keep the World Centre informed of the changing situation and of your own activities in this important opportunity for significant assistance to the stricken community of mountain people, including members of the Bahá'í community. It may be that the World Centre itself may be able to offer some form of help or suggest ways to further aid the beleaguered Indian peoples. The House of Justice will offer prayers for your guidance. (Written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Chile, 07/14/89, *Guidance for Bahá'í Radio*, p. 37, [http://www.bahai-library.net/english/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=131:guidance-for-bahai-radio&catid=6:bahai-compilations&Itemid=7](http://www.bahai-library.net/english/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=131:guidance-for-bahai-radio&catid=6:bahai-compilations&Itemid=7) )

#### **XIV. Teaching American Indians in the City**

He was very pleased to hear of initial steps you have taken to teach the Indians. He adds one suggestion (he does not know if it is practicable or not): can contact not be made with Indians who have become more or less absorbed into the life of the white element of the country and live in or visit the big cities? These people, finding the Bahá'ís sincerely lacking in prejudice—or that even worse attitude, condescension— might not only take interest in our teachings, but also help us to reach their people in a proper way.

It is a great mistake to believe that because people are illiterate or live primitive lives, they are lacking in either intelligence or sensibility. On the contrary, they may well look on us, with the evils of our civilization, with its moral corruption, its ruinous wars, its hypocrisy and conceit, as people who merit watching with both suspicion and contempt. We should meet them as equals, well-wishers, people who admire and respect their ancient descent, and who feel that they will be interested, as we are in a living religion and not in the dead forms of present-day churches. (From a letter dated September 21, 1951, written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Teaching Committee of the Americas in *Lights of Guidance*, #1777, p. 524)

## **XV. American Indian Teaching Conferences**

... the first American Indian Teaching Conference in Northern Arizona; the American Indian Teaching Conference in Los Angeles, California; the Alaskan Teaching Conference in Fairbanks; the Hawaii-wide Teaching Conference in Honolulu; the Western Canada Summer Conference in Banff; the Maritime Teaching Conference in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island; the Teaching Conference in Beaulac, Canada;..... (Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Bahá'í World 1950-57*, p. 114)

## **XVI. Intermarrying with American-Indians**

He thinks you did well to marry, and He is glad you married an American-Indian. We Bahá'ís approve of inter-racial unions, and you should do all you can to make your marriage a success and make your husband happy. (Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 31, 1950, *Lights of Guidance*, #1803, p. 530)

## **XVII. Summons to the American Indians**

In the Divine Plan bequeathed to you by 'Abdu'l-Bahá is disclosed the glorious destiny of those who are the descendants of the early inhabitants of your continent. We call upon the indigenous believers who are firmly rooted in the Bahá'í Teachings to aid, through both deed and word, those who have not yet attained that level of understanding. Progress along the path to their destiny requires that they refuse to be drawn into the divisiveness and militancy around them, and that they strive to make their own distinctive contribution to the pursuit of the goals of the Four Year Plan, both beyond the confines of North America and at home. They should be ever mindful of the vital contribution they can make to the work of the Faith throughout the American continent, in the circumpolar areas and in the Asian region of the Russian Federation. (The Universal House of Justice, Supplementary Message to the Followers of Bahá'u'lláh in North America: Alaska, Canada, Greenland and the United States Riḍván 153, 1996, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1986-2001*, ¶220.8, p. 508)

## **XVIII. American Indians Need to be taught with Actions as Well as Words**

Love ye all religions and all races with a love that is true and sincere and show that love through deeds and not through the tongue; for the latter hath no importance, as the majority of men are, in speech, well-wishers, while action is the best. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, #34, p. 69)

In their effort, the friends must be certain to demonstrate through their attitude, actions and words the genuineness of their belief in the Faith's central principle, namely, the oneness of humankind.

The friends will, too, want to assist in ways that are appropriate and practical towards resolving the complex issues confronting the native peoples. (Letter to an individual believer, dated 12 February 2002, written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, in [http://bahai-library.com/uhj\\_indian\\_nations](http://bahai-library.com/uhj_indian_nations))

## **XIX. American Indian Teaching and Training Institutes**

As with other populations around the Bahá'í world, an important result of our four decades of experience has been a great deal of learning. It was in this context that the International Teaching Centre engaged in an extensive consultation on short- and long-term strategies for achieving widespread, sustainable growth among the indigenous peoples of North America, with the expectation that these original inhabitants of the land "may realize that they are equals, and partners in the affairs of the Cause of God."

More than a decade ago, in an analysis of the work among the native peoples of Canada, the Teaching Centre concluded that the set backs were a result of not having a practical and continuous vehicle to educate them in the Cause. The absence of such a vehicle presented a profound impediment to a systematic, long-term, and sustained plan of action. With the experience of the past few years, it has become abundantly clear that the training institute is the practical means required to implement such a plan of action. For this reason the Teaching Centre recommends a focus on strengthening the institute process among the native populations as the primary strategy for both expansion and consolidation. (The International Teaching Centre, June 20, 2002, to the members of the Continental Board of Counsellors in the Americas)

## **XX. Topics Pertaining to American Indians**

1576. Possibly Indians of America were Influenced by Prophets in Asia

It is possible the Indians of the Americas were influenced in the remote past by Prophets in Asia. But again, as there is nothing in our teachings about it we cannot do

more than speculate. (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 25, 1950 /Compilations, Lights of Guidance, p. 477)

### Indian Nations and National Spiritual Assemblies

One: Question to the Universal House of Justice: 2002-01-13

... I would like to mention something for the consideration of our beloved House of Justice. As you may know, the American Indian Reservations in the U.S.A. are officially considered by the United States government to be sovereign states under the protection of, but independent from, the United States of America. I was recently reading an article on American Indian prophecies, which can be found at: <http://bahai-library.com/talks/lee.brown.html>

In it Mr. Brown speaks about the necessity for all of the peoples to come together, including the Indians, who thus far have been largely excluded. I was wondering if perhaps the Indian Nations could be officially recognized by the Universal House of Justice as such and blessed with the formation of their own National Spiritual Assembly(ies). I do not know if there are enough Bahá'ís on any one Reservation to form such a holy body, but perhaps all of them combined could possibly qualify for a joint one, as the Beloved Guardian did for Africa in 1953, when he combined many countries into one giant National Spiritual Assembly area ...

Response from the Universal House of Justice:

12 February 2002

Dear Bahá'í Friend,

Your email message of 13 January 2002 has been warmly received at the Bahá'í World Centre, and we can reply as follows.

The Universal House of Justice was touched by the spirit of love and devotion expressed in your letter and has noted your suggestion that it consider officially recognizing native American reservations as sovereign states. In response to a similar recommendation, the following was provided on behalf of the House of Justice:

...Clearly, this recommendation was prompted by a conscientious desire, inspired by basic Bahá'í principles, to assist the downtrodden to rise to the full realization of their rights and responsibilities as human beings. Indeed, the purpose of the coming of Bahá'u'lláh is to lift the yoke of oppression from his loved ones, to liberate all the people of the world, and to provide the means for their abiding happiness. In this regard, the Tablets of the Divine Plan addressed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to North America make it clear that the destiny of the native Americans as an illumined and fulfilled people is linked to the quality of their response to the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. The primary obligation of the American Bahá'ís must therefore be to see that the Divine Message is effectively delivered to the native peoples. In their effort, the friends must be certain to demonstrate

through their attitude, actions and words the genuineness of their belief in the Faith's central principle, namely, the oneness of humankind.

The friends will, too, want to assist in ways that are appropriate and practical towards resolving the complex issues confronting the native peoples. But since these issues, like tribal governance, sovereignty and local self-determination, are frequently entangled in political contention, the friends must guard against such entanglements lest the character and purpose of the Faith be jeopardized. Sovereignty, for instance, is essentially a political matter, as it is concerned with claims to political autonomy and its far-reaching implications. While American Indian tribes may justifiably be regarded as nations, they are not nation states within the Federation of the United States of America. Determining questions of sovereignty is the prerogative of established political authorities....

You may be assured of the ardent prayers of the House of Justice in the Holy Shrines that the Blessed Beauty may guide your steps and confirm your endeavors in service to our beloved Cause.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

Department of the Secretariat

[http://www.bahai-library.com/?file=uhj\\_indian\\_nations.html](http://www.bahai-library.com/?file=uhj_indian_nations.html)

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

DEPARTMENT OF THE SECRETARIAT

23 May 2004

Transmitted by email: lkbeaston@hotmail.com

Dr. Littlebrave Beaston

U.S.A.

Dear Bahá'í Friend,

In reply to your email message of 12 May 2004, we are enclosing for your study a copy of a memorandum dated 26 April 1999, which was prepared by the Research Department at the Bahá'í World Centre.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

Department of the Secretariat

Enclosure

MEMORANDUM

To: The Universal House of Justice

Date: 26 April 1999

From: Research Department

Statements in the Bahá'í Writings Concerning Native Americans

The Research Department has studied the issues raised by Ms. ...in her letter of 9 March 1999 to the Universal House of Justice. By way of background, Ms. ...explains that, after becoming a Bahá'í, she began to learn about the history of the Native American peoples, their intelligence and nobility, rich cultural heritage and contribution to world civilization, and of the sufferings they endured at the hands of foreign powers. She includes in her letter a brief statement, prepared by an educator, which attests to the con-

tribution of the Native peoples to civilization and summarizes some of the atrocities perpetrated against them. Ms. ...states that, while she understands that the Message of Bahá'u'lláh is the healing balm, she also believes that awareness of the pattern of repression will help to advance the healing process.

Ms. ... 's questions revolve around the meaning of several statements concerning Native American peoples that appear in the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the letters of Shoghi Effendi. It is her view that these statements not only conflict with the historical record, as explicated in her letter, but they are a source of distress to Native Americans. She seeks clarification of specific phrases and enquires about the implications of these passages for the future of the cultures of indigenous peoples.

### Context for Addressing the Issues

We enclose for Ms. ... 's study a copy of a compilation entitled "Cultural Diversity in the Age of Maturity" that was recently prepared for a National Spiritual Assembly in the Pacific area. The National Assembly was concerned about the preservation of cultural diversity and how this is to be fostered in the Bahá'í community. It is the view of the Research Department that the compilation will provide a comprehensive framework for addressing the underlying issues raised by Ms. .... From a study of the extracts contained therein a number of themes emerge, for example:

- The advent of Bahá'u'lláh ushers in the age of maturity of the human race.
- The fundamental principle of the oneness of humankind and the aim of the Faith to promote unity in diversity underlie the Bahá'í approach to indigenous peoples.
- Bahá'ís are encouraged to preserve their inherited cultural identities and practices, so long as the activities involved do not contravene the principles of the Faith. Peoples in all societies have customs that require modification.
- The Teachings of the Faith constitute a divine standard for determining what aspects of a particular culture are to be retained.
- The Bahá'í administrative institutions have an important role to play in fostering diversity and guiding social evolution.
- Peoples of widely differing backgrounds will greatly enrich the Bahá'í community and contribute to the evolving world civilization.

### Questions of Language

Ms. ... poses a number of questions about certain words and phrases, used to characterize Native Americans, that appear in the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi. She seeks clarification concerning the exact meanings intended by the Master and the Guardian, since their descriptions do not appear, to her, to take into consideration the positive qualities and contributions of indigenous Americans.

Statement of 'Abdu'l-Bahá: "...like unto savages..."



Reference is made to the statement of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in which He compares the “indigenous population of America” to the “ancient inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula, who, prior to the Mission of Muhammad, were like unto savages”, [1] and to the fact that the dictionary definition of the word “savage” does not, in Ms....’s view, do justice to her noble ancestors. The passage is taken from a Tablet dated 8 April 1916, addressed to the Bahá’ís of the United States and Canada. It forms part of the Master’s “Tablets of the Divine Plan”. [2] Ms.... will note that, in recent editions of this work, the translations have been enhanced to more closely reflect the original text. The particular excerpt of interest to Ms.... was re-translated by Shoghi Effendi and appears on page 16 of “Citadel of Faith”. [3] The newer translation differs in several important ways from the passage she cites in her letter.

While the Research Department has not, to date, been able to find an explanation in the literature of the Faith concerning ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s choice of the word “savages” to designate the two peoples, the following extract from a letter dated 3 January 1999, written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a believer in Canada who raised a similar concern, sets the passage in context. The House of Justice states:

As you have noted, establishing unity in diversity within Bahá’í communities in Canada will be “a long journey and we’re not there yet”. In fact, there is no culture or society in the world today that conforms to the divine standards set by Bahá’u’lláh. This is of course true of the Canadian Bahá’í community, which is made up of a culturally diverse group of imperfect human beings who, despite their own failings, are engaged in trying to create Bahá’u’lláh’s promised Divine Civilization. Bahá’í civilization does not yet exist, within any culture or any Bahá’í community.

Various peoples of the world, when their souls have been illumined by the light of one of God’s Revelations, have been empowered to transcend the limitations imposed by those aspects of their culture which were not in conformity with divine principles. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá confirms this in the Tablet to which you refer (“Tablets of the Divine Plan”, Wilmette: Bahá’í Publishing Trust 1993, pp. 30–35). The various Arab tribes which existed in Muhammad’s time, though uncivilized by contemporary standards, were nevertheless transformed by the vitalizing power of a Manifestation of God. The point, therefore, is not whether or to what extent any one of the various indigenous peoples of the Americas may have been “savages”; rather, it is that they are capable of being “so illumined as to enlighten the whole world”. The principle is a universal truth, not one relating to one particular people or culture. Today, whatever their past histories, all cultures and societies are equally in need of such illumination.

To assist Ms. ... in her thinking, we attach a short compilation entitled, “The Importance of Native American Peoples”. It is hoped that the additional extracts will help to broaden Ms. ... ’s study of the subject. Extracts 9–10 and 12–14 in this compilation, from letters written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, underline the Master’s positive expectations for the Native American peoples.

### Statements Written on Behalf of Shoghi Effendi

Ms. ... enquires about the meaning of the following words and phrases found in letters written on behalf of the Guardian:

...for the most part downtrodden and ignorant.... Their enrolment in the Faith will enrich them and us... (extract 5)

...primitive peoples of South America... (extract 6)

It is a great mistake to believe that because people are illiterate or live primitive lives, they are lacking in either intelligence or sensibility. (extract 7)

The Research Department has not been able to locate any interpretations of these passages in the Bahá’í writings. Ms.... is free to arrive at her own understanding. It is suggested, however, that she consider the possibility that, rather than constituting a denigration of the glorious past of the indigenous peoples of the Americas, the statements might be descriptive of the state of affairs that resulted not only from the exploitation they suffered at the hands of various elements of society, but also from the social and cultural decline that typically coincides with the end of a religious Dispensation.

As to her questions about the destiny of the indigenous peoples and the preservation of their cultures and the attitudes of non-Native Americans to Native Americans, Ms.... is referred to the compilation entitled “Cultural Diversity in the Age of Maturity”. She might also wish to consult with her Local Spiritual Assembly and Auxiliary Board member about these issues.

Passage in the Message of the Universal House of Justice to the Caribbean Conference, May 1971

Ms. ... cites the following passage from the message of the Universal House of Justice to the Caribbean Conference and enquires about the meaning of the statement of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá contained therein:

The Americas have been a melting pot and a meeting place for the races of men, and the need is acute for the fulfillment of God’s promises of the realization of the oneness of mankind. Particularly do the Master and the Guardian point to the Afro-Americans and the Amerindians, two great ethnic groups whose spiritual powers will be released through their response to the Creative Word. But our Teachings must touch all, must include all peoples. And, in this hour of your tireless activity, what special rewards shall come to those who will arise, summoned by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Words: “Now is the time for you to divest yourselves of the

garment of attachment to this world that perisheth, to be wholly severed from the physical world, become heavenly angels, and travel to these countries.”

Ms. ... may be interested to know that the Words of the Master are from “Tablets of the Divine Plan”, page 34. As in the case of the other extract discussed above, the translation has been modified to reflect the Guardian’s translation published in “Citadel of Faith”, page 29, and replaces the version cited by Ms. .... As to the meaning of the passage, it is suggested that when it is read within the context of the Tablet, it constitutes a call to detachment and sacrificial service.

### Prayer for America

With regard to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s reference to “this just government” in the Prayer for America, in light of its past action in relation to Native Americans, Ms.... wishes to know whether the Master was referring to the present or a future government.[4] While we have not been able to locate a statement in the Bahá’í writings that specifically elucidates ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s intention in referring to the American government as “just”, it seems reasonable to suggest that since all human governments have their failings in various degrees of gravity the term might well imply a relative condition in relation to other governments. Furthermore, it is important to consider Shoghi Effendi’s definitions of a “just government” given in response to questions concerning the Bahá’í injunction of obedience to government. For example, a letter dated 7 September 1938 written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual states:

As regards the Bahá’í principle of obedience to just governments, what is meant here by “just” is recognized and well-established authority.

Further, in a letter dated 3 July 1948, written on his behalf to a National Teaching Committee, Shoghi Effendi provided the following clarification of a statement in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Will and Testament:

What the Master’s statement really means is obedience to a duly constituted government, whatever that government may be in form. We are not the ones, as individual Bahá’ís, to judge our Government as just or unjust— for each believer would be sure to hold a different viewpoint, and within our own Bahá’í fold a hotbed of dissension would spring up and destroy our unity. We must build up our Bahá’í system, and leave the faulty systems of the world to go their own way. We cannot change them through becoming involved in them; on the contrary they will destroy us.

Finally, we provide an extract from a letter dated 30 August 1987, written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a Local Spiritual Assembly in response to a query about an historic status agreement concluded between the Bahá’í World Centre and the

Israeli Government. In the course of its response, the House of Justice comments on statements in the Prayer for America. The letter states:

The main element of your question relates to the statement made by the House of Justice “That the Government which was party to so unprecedented an act happens to be that of a people who have only recently returned, after many centuries of exile, to their homeland bespeaks a token of divine favour of incalculable spiritual and historical importance for the Jewish people.”

This allusion to the spiritual significance of an historic act of recognition accorded to the Cause of God can no more be construed as a blanket approval of the policies of the Israeli Government than ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Prayer for America could be taken as endorsement of the dispossession of the American Indians or of the treatment of the Blacks....

[1] See extract 1 in “The Importance of Native American Peoples” (attached)

[2] Tablets of the Divine Plan (Wilmette: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1993), p. 33

[3] Citadel of Faith: Messages to America 1947–1957 (Wilmette: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1995)

[4] “Bahá’í Prayers: A Selection of Prayers Revealed by Bahá’u’lláh, the Báb, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá” (Wilmette: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1993), p. 25

Attachments 2

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE  
DEPARTMENT OF THE SECRETARIAT  
27 March 2003

Transmitted by email: @juno.com

Mrs. P

U.S.A.

Dear Bahá’í Friend,

The Universal House of Justice regretted to learn from your email message of 3 June 2002 of the difficulties you have encountered with members of the Bahá’í community concerning your ethnicity and involvement in Native American traditional cultural practices. Certainly the contribution of each individual is essential to attaining that unity in diversity which will ensure a rich, healthy and dynamic community life.

The basis for determining the acceptability of activities in which Bahá’ís may engage is the standard set forth in the Bahá’í Teachings. It is important that other religious traditions are not commingled with Bahá’í functions, as this would create a confused picture and becloud the purposes of the Faith. To avoid so undesirable a situation, a distinction must be made as to whether what is described as a “traditional ceremony” is rooted in religious practice of the past. There are, of course, traditions in various societies that are purely cultural and have no religious significance, and to the extent that these do not conflict with Bahá’í principles, there is no harm if Bahá’ís wish to participate in them. As regards the question of healing, different societies have evolved their own approaches

which may not at all be related to any religious ritual and should not be rejected out of hand by Bahá'ís. The use and suitability of such approaches would depend on their scientific validity.

The House of Justice does not wish to rule on all specific cultural practices, nor would it be possible to do so; however, you may be able to reach an understanding through consultation among friends who have similar concerns in the light of the Bahá'í Teachings. Further, you may seek the advice of the Local or National Spiritual Assembly on specific issues you cannot otherwise resolve. Your continuing efforts to obtain a deeper understanding of the Bahá'í Teachings will be of considerable assistance to you.

We are enclosing a compilation of extracts of letters written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice on the subject of cultural diversity that you may find helpful in your study.

Be assured of the ardent prayers of the House of Justice in the Holy Shrines that the Blessed Beauty may guide your every step in His path.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,  
Department of the Secretariat  
Enclosure

## **XXI. Messages to American Indians at Specific Gatherings**

International Bahá'í Center  
Haifa, Israel  
December 21, 1947

Dearly beloved co-workers:

Your joint message filled my heart with joy and gratitude. I welcome your historic letter, and regard it as a landmark in the history of our beloved Faith. I will pray for every one of you from the depths of my heart, and will supplicate the Almighty to bless and sustain you and aid you to deepen your knowledge of the Faith and promote effectively its best interests. Persevere in your task, and rest assured that Bahá'u'lláh will watch over you and guide you.

Your true brother,  
Shoghi

(Shoghi Effendi's response to the first letter from the Omaha tribe in Macy, Nebraska)

Praise be to the Almighty that you have gathered in that beautiful spot in a spirit of love and harmony for the purpose of strengthening the bonds of unity between yourselves and among all men.

The All-Wise Creator of earth and heaven has from the beginning which has no beginning sent to His peoples Divine Messengers to guide them to the Straight Path.

These Wise Ones have come to establish the unity of the Kingdom in human hearts. This great evolutionary process of building the organic unity of the human race has entered a new stage with this mighty message of Bahá'u'lláh. His voice is the voice of the Great Spirit. His love for humankind is the force of the New Age.

He who sends the rain, who causes the sun and the stars to shine, the rivers to flow, the winds to blow and the earth to give forth her bounties has in this Great Day sent to all mankind Bahá'u'lláh. It is this Great One who has opened the door of divine knowledge to every soul. It is His teachings that will establish world unity and bring about universal peace.

The people of the world are the tools in His hand. They must strive to understand His message and to walk in the path of His divine guidance. Every human being is responsible in this day to seek the truth for himself and thereafter to live according to that wise counsel. The old ones have all longed for this sweet message. Praise God that you have found it.

Now awakened to new wisdom, now guided to the straight path, now illumined with this mighty message, strive you day and night to guide and assist the thirsty ones in all lands to the ever-flowing fountain, the wandering ones to this fortress of certainty, the ignorant ones to this source of knowledge and the seekers to that One for whom their hearts long.

May your consultation reach so high a level of endeavour and purpose that the Great One will open before your faces the doors of the paradise of wisdom and love and cause the light of the Abhá Beauty to shine in your midst.

(The Universal House of Justice, Message to Bahá'í Unity Conference, Ganado, Arizona, dated 18 May 1972, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963 to 1986*, #112, pp. 217-218)

## **XXII. Messages from Two Hands of the Cause of God Pertaining to and/or for American Indians**

Address of William Sears  
July 1-3, 1962  
Poorman Reserve, Saskatchewan, Canada

Beloved Friends:

I shall treasure this moment always. Nothing could bring me greater joy and happiness than this privilege of being here with all of you at this historic Powwow in the Province of Saskatchewan, Canada. Before I am finished, I am sure you will all more fully understand my words of joy and gratitude for this privilege.

For most of the past ten years, my family and I have been living in the continent of America, in the midst of wonderful people of so many different tribes. We also spent many months serving at the World Center of the Bahá'í Faith in the Holy Land, Israel, on the side of Mount Carmel.

One afternoon while I was walking along the side of the sacred Mountain, where the feet of Christ and the Prophets of old had walked, I was handed a small book. It was called: The Gospel of the Redman, written by Ernest Thompson Seaton. It had been brought to me from here, Canada, by Mr. Balyuzi, a much loved figure of the Bahá'í Faith. Mr. Balyuzi had just returned from a visit to Saskatchewan, and to the American Indians in many other places. He was so filled with love and respect for those whom he had met that, following a visit, he brought me the book, Gospel of the Redman. It contained, he said, many of the basic principles of the people he had come to admire so greatly.

When I had finished reading The Gospel of the Redman, I understood what Mr. Balyuzi meant. I began to write a letter to each one of the many followers of Bahá'u'lláh and the Bahá'í Faith among the American Indians in both North and South America. Little did I think at the time that I might have the pleasure of sharing that letter with you in person. Circumstances have brought me to the Western world, for which I thank Almighty God, the Great Spirit of us all.

I realize, of course, that the book, The Gospel of the Redman does not apply in every detail equally to all parts of North and South America, or equally to all Tribes of American Indians. It is, however, a leaf in the stream which shows the direction of the current.

Yet the thoughts expressed in that book clearly showed the lofty station and great dignity of the American Indian. It also showed me, as a Bahá'í that they were truly a "prepared people" in whose hearts the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh had already taken root, whether consciously or unconsciously. I realized how very little the other parts of the world know about this wonderful people assembled here today. Therefore, I arranged to send my letter to the more than 250 countries, dependencies and islands where the Bahá'í Faith had been established, that people in all parts of the planet may understand and come to know the greatness and nobility of the American Indian.

Today I have the rich blessing of fulfilling the Word written by Bahá'u'lláh, the Founder of the Bahá'í Faith a century ago. These are His Words:

“Proclaim, then, that which The Most Great Spirit will inspire thee to utter in the service of the Cause of thy Lord, that thou mayest stir up the souls of all men and incline their hearts unto this most blessed and All-Glorious Court.”

To demonstrate the close link of love and truth that binds together the beautiful truth of the American Indian with the Teachings of the Bahá'í Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, I have written down the four main points of what The Gospel of the Redman called: *The Indian Creed*. It is, of course, only possible to speak of it briefly here.

First Point: “There is but one Great Spirit, the Creator and Ruler of all things, to Whom we are responsible. He is eternal, invisible, omnipotent, unportrayable. In and through Him all beings live and move; to Him all worship and allegiance are due; from Him all good things come.”

Second Point: “Having arrived on this earth, the First duty of man is the attainment of perfect manhood, which is the just development of every part and power that goes to make a man, and the fullest reasonable enjoyment of the same. He must achieve manhood in the Body Way, the Mind Way, the Spirit Way, and the Service Way.”

Third Point: “Having attained to high manhood, he must consecrate that manhood to the service of his people.”

Fourth Point: “The Soul of man is immortal. Whence it came into this world or whither it goes when it departs, he does not know. But when his time comes to die, he should remember that he is going on to the next world.”

In addition to this high moral creed, of which this is all but a brief digest, I found in The Gospel of the Redman, the following twelve commandments:

One: “There is but one Great Spirit. He is eternal, Omniscient, Omnipotent, Invisible. He pervades all things at all times.”

Two: “Thou shall not make a likeness of the Great Spirit, or portray Him as a visible being.”

Three: “Hold thy word of honor sacred. Lying is at all times shameful, for the Great Spirit is everywhere all the time.”

Four: “Thou shalt keep the Feasts, learn the dances, respect the taboos, and observe the customs of your tribe, if you would be a good member of the community and profit by its strength. For these things are the wisdom of the Ancients and your fathers in the long ago.”

Five: “Honor and obey thy father and thy mother.”

Six: “Thou shalt not commit murder.”

Seven: “Be chaste in thought and deed, according to the highest standard of your Tribe.”

Eight: “Thou shalt not steal.”

Nine: “Be not greedy of great riches. It is a shame and a sin of all unworthiness in a man to have great possessions when there be those of his Tribe who are in want.”

Ten: “Touch not the poisonous firewater that robs man of his strength, and makes wise men turn fools. Touch not nor taste any food or drink that robs the body of its power or the spirit of its wisdom.”

Eleven: “Be clean, both yourself and the place you dwell in.”

Twelve: “Love your life, perfect your life, beautify all things in your life; glory in your strength and beauty. Rejoice in the fullness of your aliveness. Seek to make your life long and full of service to your people. And prepare a noble Death song for the day when you are about to cross the Great Divide.”

This is truly a high moral code that deserves to rank in the preeminent place among the ethical standards of mankind.

Let us now examine Bahá'u'lláh's own words concerning such a moral code and such commandments. To share with you all of the beautiful and astonishing things Bahá'u'lláh has written concerning such truths would fill many volumes. I shall speak in detail of the First Commandment and of the “Great Spirit,” but shall touch upon the others only brief-



ly. The Bahá'ís themselves, wherever you find them, will share with you the endless pearls from Bahá'u'lláh's immeasurable ocean.

**1. One of the most fundamental beliefs in the heart of every member of the noble race of American Indian is this:**

“There is but one Great Spirit.”

Bahá'u'lláh speaks constantly of this One Great Spirit, the Most Great Spirit, or the Supreme Spirit which fills all space and is the source of all life. His words on this subject alone would fill a giant volume. The book called The Gospel of the Redman says: “He (God) is eternal, omniscient, omnipotent, invisible. He pervades all things at all times.”

Bahá'u'lláh writes that God is eternal:

“The one true God hath everlastingly existed, and will everlastingly continue to exist.” (2)

Bahá'u'lláh declares that God is Omniscient:

“Thou art He Who knoweth all things and is know of none... Thou art the All-Knowing, the All-Informed... He knoweth the secrets both of the heavens and the earth. His knowledge embraceth all things, ...No God is there beside Thee, the Supreme Ruler, the All-Glorious, the omniscient.” (3)

Bahá'u'lláh says that God is Omnipotent:

“The essence of all power is God's... Powerful is He to do that which He pleaseth. He said: Be, and it is... Out of every manifestation if His invincible power oceans of eternal light have outpoured. How immensely exalted are the wondrous testimonies of His almighty sovereignty, a glimmer of which, if it but touched them, would utterly consume all that are in the heavens and in the earth! How indescribably lofty are the tokens of His consummate power... glorified are Thou, Lord, God Omnipotent!” (4)

Bahá'u'lláh states that God is invisible:

“From time immemorial, He, the Devine Being (God), hath been veiled in the ineffable sanctity of His exalted Self, and will continue to be wrapt in the impenetrable mystery of His unknowable Essence... Ten thousand Prophets, each a Moses, are thunderstruck, upon the Sinai of their search at God's forbidding voice, ‘Thou shalt never behold Me!’, whilst a myriad of Messengers, each as great as Jesus, stand dismayed upon their heavenly thrones by the interdiction, ‘Mine Essence thou shalt never apprehend!’ ...His holy and chosen Messengers

are, without exception, but the expressions of Him (God) Who is the Invisible of the Invisibles.” (5)

Bahá'u'lláh declares that the attributes of Almighty God pervades all things at all times:

“Behold how they have pervaded the whole of creation. Such is their virtue that not a single atom in the universe can be found which doth not declare the evidences of His Might, which doth not glorify His holy Name, or is not expressive or the effulgent light of his unity.”(6)

This is how wondrously and accurately the Teachings of the Bahá'í Faith of Bahá'u'lláh fulfill the worlds of the First Commandment in the moral code of the American Indian. Is it any wonder that the Bahá'ís in every part of the world feel that the American Indians are truly “prepared people” who will arise in great numbers to sing the love-creating, life-giving music of this song?

As you study the Writings of the Bahá'í Faith and dip deeply into the waters of the words of Bahá'u'lláh, you will find the same rich fulfillment of the truths of the Indian Creed as well as of its Commandments. Since we cannot hold back the sun and time, let me move on to speak more briefly of each of the other commandments given in the book The Gospel of the Redman.

The Bahá'ís are aware that this book can no more hold all the beauty and truth of the Indian peoples than an acorn shell can hold the ocean. Yet, we feel that this brief glimpse into the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh will lead you to search out the other truths wherein you will find the ocean and not the acorn.

## **2. The Second Commandment in this exalted Indian Creed States:**

“Thou shalt not make a likeness of the Great Spirit, or portray Him as a visible being.”

Bahá'u'lláh forbids the human portrayal of Almighty God, the Great Spirit. So important is this principle that Bahá'u'lláh even forbids the use of His own picture. He warns that men must not fall into the grave error or worshipping a human personality. Man, He says, must never forget that the Messengers of god are only Mirrors which reflect the Sunlight of the Great Sun of Truth. This Great Spirit must never be pictured in human form, He says. In Bahá'u'lláh's own words:

“The meditations of the profoundest thinkers, the devotions of the holiest saints, the highest expressions of praise from either human pen or tongue, are but a reflection of that which hath been created within themselves, through the revelation of the Lord, their God... Immeasurable exalted is He above the strivings of

human mind to grasp His Essence or of human tongue to describe His master.”  
(7)

### **3. The Third Commandment of the Creed of the American Indian says:**

“Hold thy word of honor sacred. Lying is at all times shameful, for the Great Spirit is everywhere at all times.”

Bahá'u'lláh through the Writings of His Faith makes it clear that:

“Truthfulness is the foundation of all the virtues of mankind. Without truthfulness, progress and success in all the worlds are impossible for a soul.” (8)

In another place, the Writings of the Bahá'í Faith say:

“Let the light of truth and honest shine from your faces so that all may know that your word, in business or pleasure, is a word of trust... Forget self and world for the whole.” (9)

Of this Commandment Bahá'u'lláh writes:

“Let truthfulness and courtesy by your adorning... Beware, O people of Bahá'u'lláh, lest ye walk in the ways of them whose words differ from their deeds. Let your acts be a guide unto all mankind, for the professions of most men, be they high or low, differ from their conduct. It is through your deeds that ye can distinguish yourselves from others.” (10)

Bahá'u'lláh counsels all of mankind on this subject saying:

“Beautify your tongues, O people, with truthfulness, and adorn your souls with the ornament of honesty. Beware, O people, that ye deal not treacherously with any one. Be ye the trustees of God amongst His creatures.” (11)

### **4. The Commandments as given in the book *The Gospel of the Redman*, continue as follows:**

“Thou shalt keep the Feasts, learn the dances, respect the taboos, and observe the customs of your tribe, if you would be a good member of the community and profit by its strength. For these things are the wisdom of the Ancients and your fathers in the long ago.”

Bahá'u'lláh has once again re-established these Ancient Truths in the Feasts of His Bahá'í Faith. Every nineteen days the Bahá'ís in every part of the world, of every nation, and ever skin-color, celebrate this Feast day with its three parts:

- (1) To supplicate to the Great Spirit (God) For purity, strength, and guidance.
- (2) To consult upon the problems of the community and to look after the welfare of its members.
- (3) To break bread in fellowship, friendship, and happiness together.

The writing of Bahá'u'lláh's Faith say:

“In the sacred laws of God, in every cycle and dispensation there are blessed feasts, holidays and workless days... All should be rejoice together... As it is a blessed day, it should not be neglected, nor deprived of results by making it a date devoted to the pursuits of mere pleasure... Today there is no result or fruit greater than guiding the people. Undoubtedly the friends of God, upon such a day, must leave tangible... traces that should reach all mankind and not pertain only to the Bahá'ís... Therefore, my hope is that the friends of God, every one of them, may become as the mercy of God to all mankind.” (12)

Bahá'u'lláh points out that there is a fundamental Truth underlying each of the Ancient Customs in every part of the world. Bahá'u'lláh says that each part of humanity would be bound together by one common Law of Justice, and would worship together the One Great Spirit, God. The Teachings of the Bahá'í Faith urge every Family, Tribe, City State, and Nation to pray and meditate upon the underlying truths of these Feasts, Dances, Taboos, Customs, and Rites; Bahá'u'lláh urges them to preserve the basic purity of each one of them, but He entreats them to follow the inner spiritual truth which makes them one, rather than the outward form which differs from nation to nation, island to island, continent to continent.

In some parts of the world men plant bananas, in another corn, in another wheat, in another rice. It is the food that is important, not its shape, its color, or the place from which it comes. This is true also of spiritual things. It is displeasing to God that one should belittle the Faith of another because outwardly it appears different, when inwardly it worships the one, same Great Spirit.

Bahá'u'lláh urges us to build upon the past wisdom of the Ancients and of our father long ago, retaining the true spirit of all they have taught us. He urges also to be like the butterfly that has emerged from the cocoon. We must use our wings to fly, honoring and respecting the cocoon from which we are sprung, but now soaring like a giant bird into the sky of the future, and not try to return to the shell from which we have been born—as the child would not return to the womb of its mother. These days, Bahá'u'lláh tells us, are the days of fulfillment, when the Ancient Feasts are now being established as the Feast of the entire human race under one God.

## **5. Another important Commandment, number five, is this:**

“Honor thy father and obey thy mother.”

Bahá'u'lláh, through the Writings of His Faith, strongly upholds this ancient command of love, honor and obedience to parents. The Writings of the Bahá'í Faith say:

“Nurse your children from the breast of God’s Love. Encourage them to be noble and pure. Set the example for them by your own lives. Teach the little ones to think always of God, and to turn their faces toward His light. Help them to learn respect for their elders, and good manners. While they are small trees, straighten their thoughts, so they will stand erect with good qualities and will have strength worthy of a human being.” (13)

The Writings of the Bahá'í Faith call upon the children to honor and obey their parents, to love and respect them. It urges the parents to exert every effort to train their children to walk in the right path. One of the Bahá'í Prayers declares:

“O God! Educated these children. These children are the plants of Thine orchard, the flowers of Thy meadow, the roses of Thy garden. Let Thy rain fall upon them; let the Sun of Reality shine upon them with Thy love. Let Thy breeze refresh them in order that they may be trained, grown and develop, and appear in the utmost beauty, Thou art the Giver! Thou art the Compassionate!” (14)

**6. The Sixth Commandment given in The Gospel of the Redman is this:**

**7.**

“Thou shalt not commit murder.”

Bahá'u'lláh teaches that it is better to be slain than to take another human life. The spark of life was placed in the human Temple by the Great Spirit (God), and no man has the right to put out this Devine spark.

Bahá'u'lláh also teaches that gossip and backbiting are an even greater crime than murder. Murder destroys the body, but backbiting and gossip destroy the moral reputation; they attack the very spirit of man. Bahá'u'lláh has written:

“He (who searches for God) must never speak to exalt himself above any one, must wash away from the Tablet of his heart every trace of pride and vainglory, must cling to patience and resignation, observe silence and refrain from idle talk. For the tongue is a smoldering fire, and excess of speech a deadly poison. Material fire consumeth the body, whereas the fire of the tongue devoureth both heard and soul. The forces of the former lasteth for a time, whilst the effects of the latter endureth a century. That seeker (of God) should, also, regard backbiting as a grievous error, and keep himself aloof from its dominion, inasmuch as backbiting quenqueth the light of the heart, and extinguisheth the life of the soul.” (15)

Bahá'u'lláh has clearly forbidden every man to take the life of another, or to take vengeance and revenge into his own hands. The Bahá'í Faith declares, however, that there is a place for force. But, it must be the servant of Justice, in the hand of the Law. If a tyrant shows his face, all the nations should arise, Bahá'u'lláh says, and together put him down from his throne and protect the rights of every human being.

**8. The Seventh Commandment of the American Indian, as given in The Gospel of the Redman, declares:**

“Be chaste in thought and deed, according to the highest standard of your Tribe.”

Bahá'u'lláh, through the Writings of His Faith, states:

“A chaste and holy life must be made the controlling principle in the behavior and conduct of all Bahá'ís, both in their social relations with members of their own community, and in their contact with the world at large... Such a chaste and holy life with its implications of modesty, purity, temperance, decency, and clean-mindedness... demands daily vigilance in the control of one's carnal desires and corrupt inclinations... It must be remembered, however, that the maintenance of such a high standard of moral is not to be associated or confused with any form of asceticism, or of excessive and bigoted puritanism. The standard (given) by Bahá'u'lláh, seeks, under no circumstances, to deny any one the legitimate right and privilege to derive the fullest advantage and benefit from manifold joys, beauties, and pleasures with which the world has been so plentifully endowed by an All-Loving Creator.” (16)

**9. The Gospel of the Redman places great emphasis on the Eight Commandment:**

“Thou shalt not steal.”

Bahá'u'lláh has written:

“Some regard it as lawful to infringe on the integrity of the substance of their neighbor, and have made light of the injunction of God as prescribed in His Book... If the whole earth were to be converted into silver and gold, no man who can be said to have truly ascended into the heaven of faith and certitude would deign to regard it, much less to seize and keep it... They who dwell within the tabernacle of God... will refuse, though they be dying of hunger, to stretch forth their hands and seize unlawfully the property of their neighbor... The purpose of the one true God in manifesting Himself is to summon all mankind to truthfulness and sincerity, to piety and trustworthiness, to resignation and submissive-

ness to the Will of God, to forbearance and kindness, to uprightness and wisdom.” (17)

**10. Also found among the Commandments in the high moral code of the American Indian is, number nine:**

“Be not greedy of great riches. It is a shame and a sin of all unworthiness in a man to have great possessions when there be those of his Tribe who are in want.”

Bahá'u'lláh has written:

“They who are possessed of riches, however, must have the utmost regard for the poor, for great is the honor destined for those poor who are steadfast in patience. Be My Life: There is no honor... that can compare to this honor. Great is the blessedness awaiting the poor that endure patiently and conceal their sufferings, and well is it with the rich who bestow their riches on the needy and prefer them before themselves. Please God, the poor may exert themselves and strive to earn the means of their livelihood. This is a duty... which has been prescribed unto every one, and is accounted in the sight of God as a goodly deed.” (18)

The Writings of the Bahá'í Faith also say:

“We see among us men who are overburdened with riches on the one hand, and on the other those unfortunate ones who survive with nothing... This condition of affairs is wrong and must be remedied... Men must bestir themselves in this matter, and no longer delay in altering conditions which bring the misery of grinding poverty to a very large number of people... There must be special laws made, dealing with these extremes of riches and want... which gives equal justice to all. Not until this is done will they Law of God be obeyed.” (19)

Bahá'u'lláh says:

“O children of the dust: Tell the rich of the midnight sighting of the poor... to give and to be generous are attributes of Mine... Rejoice not in the things ye possess; tonight they are yours, tomorrow others will possess them... Be generous in prosperity and thankful in adversity. Be worthy of trust of your neighbor, and look upon him with a bright and friendly face. Be a treasure to the poor, and admonisher to the rich, an answerer of the cry of the needy, a preserver of thy pledge.” (20)

One of the most fundamental of all the principles of the Bahá'í Faith of Bahá'u'lláh is that which calls for the elimination of the extremes of wealth and poverty.

**11. The Tenth Commandment mentioned in the book, The Gospel of the Redman, is:**

“Touch not the poisonous firewater that robs man of his strength, and makes wise men turn fools. Touch not nor taste any food or drink that robs the body of its power or the spirit of its wisdom.”

Bahá'u'lláh, through the Writings of His Bahá'í Faith, declares:

“(A proper and noble life) requires total abstinence from all alcoholic drinks, from opium, and from similar habit-forming drugs.”

The Writings of the Bahá'í Faith also say:

“The use of intoxicants, except as remedies in the case of illness, is strictly forbidden... The Bahá'í Teaching is based on moderation, not asceticism. Enjoyment of the good and beautiful things of life, both material and spiritual, is not only encouraged, but enjoined (commanded).” (22)

**12. Another Commandment, number eleven, in this greatly to be respected code of the American Indian states:**

“Be clean, both yourself and the place you dwell in.”

Bahá'u'lláh has written to His followers, saying:

“Be the essence of cleanliness among mankind...under all circumstances conform yourselves to refined manners...” (23)

The Writings of the Bahá'í Faith also tell us:

“External cleanliness, although it is but a physical thing, has great influence upon spirituality... The fact of having a pure and spotless body exercises an influence upon the spirit of man.” (24)

In yet another place, the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh's Faith say:

“Therefore strive that the greatest cleanliness... be resplendent among the Bahá'ís... that they may be physically and morally superior... that through cleanliness and purity refinement and health, they may be the chief of the wise man, and... by their prudence and the control of their desires, they may be the princes of the pure, the free and the wise.” (25)

**13. The final Commandment given in the book, The Gospel of the Redman, number twelve, declares:**



“Love your life, perfect your life, beautify all things in your life; glory in your strength and beauty. Rejoice in the fullness of your aliveness. Seek to make your life long and full of service to your people. And prepare a noble Death song for the day when you are about to cross the Great Divide.”

Bahá'u'lláh calls upon His followers to perfect their lives, to perform continuous services for their fellowmen, and to prepare for that last great journey to the next world. He calls upon them to enjoy a full, rich life while on this earth. He counsels each of His followers to extract all the throbbing joy, wonder, awe, and beauty from their lives. Everything on earth was placed here by the Great Spirit for them to enjoy, as long as they remember two things:

- (1) They must love and serve God.
- (2) They must love and serve their fellowman.

Bahá'u'lláh has written:

“O son of man! If thou regardest Mercy, look not to that which benefits thyself; but hold to that which will benefit thy fellow-man. If thou regardest Justice, choose thou for others that which thou chooseth for thyself.” (26)

The Writings of the Bahá'í Faith say:

“This is worship: to serve mankind and to minister to the needs of the people. Service is prayer.” (27)

Bahá'u'lláh says of the immortality of the human soul, and of man's noble Death song:

“... the nature of the soul after death can be never described, nor is it... permissible to reveal its whole character to the eyes of man. The Prophets and Messengers of God have been sent down for the sole purpose of guiding mankind to the straight path of Truth. The purpose underlying their (Message) hath been to educate all men, that they may, at the hour of death, ascent, in the utmost purity and sanctity and with absolute detachment, to the throne of the Most High (God).” (28)

Bahá'u'lláh has also written:

“I have made death a messenger of joy to thee. Wherefore dost thou grieve? Death (offers) unto every confident believer the cup that is life indeed. It bestoweth joy, and is the bearer of gladness. It conferreth the gift of everlasting life.” (29)

These words of Bahá'u'lláh, concerning these Twelve Commandments which are the very breath of life to the moral code of the American Indian, have been but “a dew-drop out of fathomless ocean” of His Teachings. We have taken but a single pine-needle from the evergreen forests. Bahá'u'lláh wrote over one hundred volumes to help mankind become united into one peaceful, progressive, moral society. We have spoken of the Twelve Commandments, let us now examine, within the limits of our time, the Four Points of the Indian Creed, as given in the book, The Gospel of the Redman.

Point One: “There is but one Great Spirit...” etc.

We have already spoken of this Point in some detail, so we need not expand upon it here.

Point Two: “Having arrived on this earth, the First duty of man is the attainment of perfect manhood, which is the just development of every part and power that goes to make a man, and the fullest reasonable enjoyment of the same. He must achieve manhood in the Body Way, the Mind Way, the Spirit Way, and the Service Way.”

Bahá'u'lláh's teachings upon this subject were mentioned briefly in speaking of Commandment Twelve. However, let us add that the Writings of the Bahá'í Faith say clearly:

“The most vital duty in this day is to purify your character, to correct your manners, and improve your conduct. The beloved of the Merciful (Bahá'ís) must show forth such character and conduct among His (God's) creatures, that the fragrance of their holiness may be shed upon the whole world, and may quicken the (spiritually) dead, inasmuch as the purpose of (the Messenger of God)... is to educate the souls of men, and to refine the character of every living man.” (30)

The Writings of the Bahá'í Faith also say:

“... should any of you (Bahá'ís) enter a city he should become a center of attraction by reason of his sincerity, his faithfulness and love, his honesty and fidelity, his truthfulness and loving-kindness toward all the peoples of the world, so that the people of that city may cry out and say: ‘This man is unquestionably a Bahá'í, for his manners, his behavior, his conduct, his morals, his nature, and his disposition reflect the attributes of Bahá'ís.’” (31)

Point Three: “Having attained to high manhood, he must consecrate that manhood to the service of his people.”

Bahá'u'lláh, through the Writings of His Bahá'í Faith, declares:

“You will be the servants of God, who are dwelling near to Him, His divine helpers in the service, ministering to all humanity. All humanity! Every human being! Never forget this!” (32)

The Writings of the Bahá’í Faith say, also:

“Devotion to God implies a life of service to our fellow-creatures. We can be of service to God in no other way. If we turn our backs on our fellow-man, we are turning our backs upon God.” (33)

Point Four: “The Soul of man is immortal. Whence it came into this world or whither it goes when it departs, he does not know. But when his time comes to die, he should remember that he is going on to the next world.”

Bahá'u'lláh has written:

“Know of a truth that the soul, after its separation from the body, will continue to progress... in a state and condition which neither the revolution of the ages and centuries can alter. It will endure as long as the kingdom of God... will endure. It will manifest the signs of God and His attributes, and will reveal His loving-kindness and bounty. The movement of My Pen is stilled when it attempteth to befittingly describe the loftiness and glory of so exalted a station. The honor with which the Hand of Mercy (God) will invest the soul is such as no tongue can adequately reveal, nor any other earthly agency describe.” (34)

The writings of the Bahá’í Faith declare that the soul of man is immortal. From whence it comes and whither it will go, man does not know and cannot know in this world. But one thing he does know, that his soul is eternal and it will live forever.

Beloved friends, brothers, and sisters in the great family of the human race: these words I have shared with you during these never-to-be-forgotten days, are but one drop from the river of Bahá'u'lláh's Truth.

Followers of Bahá'u'lláh among the noble race of American Indians are arising to carry the Message of His Bahá’í Faith into all parts of the Americas, from the North Pole to the South Pole. Many of them see in this Faith the fulfillment of their ancient promises and the coming of their day of glory.

Six thousand American Indians of different Tribes have arisen recently to proclaim this truth throughout the country of Bolivia, in South America. Others, among other Tribes, have arisen in the snow-capped mountains of Chile, on the hot plains of Paraguay, in the forests and jungles of Brazil, in the high Andes of Peru and Ecuador, along the Amazon borders of Venezuela and Columbia, in the tropic islands, and green hills of Panama, in the swamps of Nicaragua, in the dry, arid mountains of Guatemala and Mexico, in Arizona, and New Mexico, as well as here in the promising land of Canada. The

greatest upsurge and response to the Teachings of Baha'u'llah in all the West can be found among the heroes and heroines who are native to its shores, the American Indian.

Around the world, the Bahá'í Faith has been carried everywhere. Its Teachings of the Oneness of God, the Oneness of His Messengers, and the Oneness of the human race has been carried into every part of the planet. National Bahá'í Assemblies have been democratically elected in every country in the Western Hemisphere, as well as throughout the rest of the world; Assemblies representing the major countries of this rapidly shrinking globe. In less than a year now, these National Assemblies, or Houses of Justice, will elect the first International House of Justice, in the Holy Land, Israel.

Any map made this month to show the progress of the Bahá'í Faith will be obsolete next month, so rapidly is the Word of Bahá'u'lláh speeding on its way around the earth. Houses of Worship, which honor the sacred Word in every Religion, have now been raised up in North and in South America, in Europe, in Africa, in Asia, and in Australia.

Africa was once called "The Dark Continent". Since the Bahá'í Faith was carried into all its corners over ten years ago, Africa has suddenly become the "Continent of Light", and the continent of the future.

The great American Indian has been called by some visionless people, "the Vanishing Race", but this is not true. They are a "Coming" race. They will rise in the years ahead to their true glory and will shed everlasting luster upon the history and the affairs of mankind, even greater than the glory of their proud past.

This is a promise made in the Writings of the Bahá'í Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. The greatest contributions to be made by this wonderful race of human beings is not in the past, nor in the present, but in the future; They will brighten the world. The Writings of the Bahá'í Faith prophesy that the American Indian "Will become great standard-bearers" of the Faith of God. Even more significant, the Writings of this Faith make the following promise concerning the American Indian:

"„there can be no doubt that through the Divine Teachings they will become so enlightened that the whole earth will be illumined." (35)

These words, I know, will help each one of you to understand the great joy and privilege which I feel today by being in your midst. I offer thanks to the Great Spirit, Almighty God, for having bounty of repeating the words of Bahá'u'lláh in your presence:

"Proclaim, then, that which the Most Great Spirit will inspire thee to utter in the service of the Cause of thy Lord, that thou mayest stir up the souls of all men and incline their hearts unto this most blessed and all-glorious Court." (36)

It is the hope of every Bahá'í that you will want to search with all the ardor of your heart and soul into the sea of Bahá'u'lláh's Teachings. We feel that these Truths of the Bahá'í Faith are like a new Spiritual Springtime which can melt the cold snows of the past Winter, and bring fresh life into every part of the world, reviving the frozen hopes of humanity; giving them warmth, and restoring their vitality, and making the world green once again with the love of God and the love of one's fellowman.

May I close with these final words of Bahá'u'lláh:

“Let him that doubteth the words which the Spirit of God hath spoken seek the Court of Our Presence and hear Our divinely-revealed verses, and be an eye-witness of the clear proof of Our claim.” (37)

It has been a great honor and privilege to be among you during these days, days which I shall remember always. I would like to say Farewell in the words of a dear African friend, spoken to me along Lake Victoria, in Uganda, East Africa.

“The scar of friendship which these days have cut on my heart, will never be healed.”

William Sears  
Hand of the Cause  
Daystar-Poorman Reserve  
Saskatchewan, Canada  
July 1-3, 1962

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Hand of the Cause of God Rúhíyyih Khánúm:

**1. National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada in June 1961**

Dearly loved Friends:

This is certainly a very late date at which to write the letters to you I assured you I would be sending you after my wonderful trip last Spring, through the U.S.A. and Canada! I had planned to write you properly, separately, and touching on points connected with the two different countries - but fatigue and the work at the World Center engulfed me before I got around to it. I think this is all to the good for the ideas I wanted to express then are very much clearer now, after my trip through East Africa, and as they are applicable to both Canada and the U.S.A. I am sure you will not mind my sending you a joint letter.

Whatever my trips amongst the friends have produced of good, they could not possibly have had as great an effect on anyone as on me. I have learned so much, had such new thoughts come to me, that I feel as if I was living in a different mental world from before. My perspective has changed very radically and I feel the best way I can be of help to your two Assemblies - shouldering such great responsibility as the primary promoters of the Divine Plan - is to just share my new thoughts with you. I have not got time for composition so will just think out loud.

It seems to me if we Bahá'ís, and especially the teachers and assembly members, do not ponder more deeply what lies ahead in the next stages of our development we are not going to be properly oriented towards the work we are carrying on.

Bahá'u'lláh warned us against the evils of civilization when carried to extremes, the Master and particularly the Guardian, elaborated on this theme until at the end of his life Shoghi Effendi fairly thundered against our civilization - particularly the American variety of it. The future Bahá'í culture and civilization is therefore scarcely likely to be patterned on it! It occurs to me (speaking for myself) that we have confused the things so highly praised in our teachings, such as freedom of speech, the democratic method of election, the ideal of justice for all and integrity in administering affairs, with our materialistic civilization which the Guardian stigmatized as corrosive and corrupt in western civilization and against the dangers of which he constantly warned us. It is these inherent weaknesses that may lead to the greatest catastrophe in history. These thoughts have formed the background in my mind against which other thoughts are beginning to stand out more and more clearly.

I remember when we had the first Japanese pilgrim here, Shoghi Effendi said to him that the majority of the human race was not white and that the majority of Bahá'ís would not be white in the future. As up until very recently the Bahá'ís of the world were almost exclusively white it is only natural that their virtues and their faults should have colored the Faith and its community life. It is illogical to suppose that what we have now is either mature or right; it is a phase in the development of the Cause; when peoples of different races are incorporated in the world-wide community (and in local communities) who can doubt that it will possess far greater power and perfection and be something quite different from what we have now? And yet let us ask ourselves frankly if we do not believe that what we North American Bahá'ís, what we Western white Bahá'ís have is the real thing, practically a finished product, and it is up to the rest of the world to accept it? I think this is our mentality; it was mine up until a few years ago. It seems to me we are confusing the fact that North America is the cradle of the Administrative Order with the old order that already exists there. Perhaps we forget sometimes that just as Bahá'u'lláh appeared in Persia because it was the worst country in the world the Administrative Order was given to America to develop because she was politically the most corrupt. I remember when the Guardian was writing "The Advent of Divine Justice" and elaborated on this theme how astonished I was, I thought we had been given the Administrative Order because we already had the best democratic system in the world and were therefore best qualified to elaborate it!

We all know what great emphasis the beloved Guardian put on mass conversion during the last five years of the Crusade and how urgently he appealed to the Bahá'ís to press forward in teaching the people of Africa and the Pacific region. He likewise repeatedly stressed teaching the American Negro and the Indian people. It has been borne in on me, at least to a limited degree, during my trips in America and Africa, the vast significance of two statements in our Writings. Bahá'u'lláh said the black people are like the pupil of the eye and sight is in the pupil; the Master said when we converted the American Indians to the Faith they would be like the original inhabitants of Arabia. The Words of these Divine Beings, we know, are the very essence of Truth. When Bahá'u'lláh likens the Negro race to the faculty of sight in the human body - the act of perception with all it implies - it is a pretty terrific statement. He never said this of anyone else. I thought the

American Negro's humility, his kindness, friendliness, courtesy and hospitableness were something to do with his oppression and the background of slavery. But after spending weeks, day after day in the villages of Africa, seeing literally thousands of Bahá'ís and non-Bahá'ís, I have wakened up to the fact that the American Negro has these beautiful qualities not because he was enslaved but because he has the characteristics of his race. I learned why the Guardian so constantly spoke of the "pure-hearted" Africans. The emphasis on the "heart" in our teachings is overwhelming. "My first counsel is this; possess a pure, kindly and radiant heart." "Thy heart is my habitation." "All in heaven and on earth have I ordained for thee except the human heart which I have made the habitation of My Beauty and Glory" etc. It is this spiritual quality defined as "heart" in our teachings which I think is one of the priceless gifts the Negro race is going to share with others in the community of the Most Great Name. I can truthfully say my association with the Africans humiliated me deeply, I felt unworthy, I felt my race unworthy, I have not said anything about intelligence because I firmly believe it is a common characteristic of all human beings, the more primitive they are the sharper their wits!

What about 'Abdu'l-Bahá's words concerning the American Indians. When I had the experience of being with them I kept asking myself what did the Master mean? Then I reviewed in my mind what had been the effect of the conversion of the original inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula to Islam; the spread of the Faith from China to the gates of Vienna, the rise of Islamic culture and civilization which was responsible for the Renaissance in Europe which in turn became the cradle of Western Civilization which has given rise to so many good things that Bahá'u'lláh Himself praised. This is what the conversion of the early Arabs meant. And, 'Abdu'l-Bahá says the conversion of the American Indians will be like that other conversion. It certainly gives one food for thought!

The non-white world is stirring. Africa is awakening; our civilization is beginning to crumble. I believe the responsibility we Bahá'ís (most of us still white) have at this time is tremendous. We must make haste to obey the instructions of the Master and the Guardian and teach in active, determined campaigns, by every means in our power, the American Negroes and Indians. In the first place it is a duty placed upon us in writing, in the second place we need them in our communities for their characteristics of mind and heart can greatly enrich our Bahá'í community life, and in the third place we cannot estimate at this time how far-flung will be the repercussions of bringing these two races in North America into the Faith. I am convinced that if we start mass conversion of the Indians and Negroes, mass conversion of the whites will follow. The people of the world are tired of words, words, words. They don't really pay any attention to what we say about "oneness, unity; world brotherhood" although many of them agree with this. What they need is to see deeds, to see Bahá'í communities, local and national, full of people of different races working together, in love, for their common belief. Then the spiritual force such a reality will release (as opposed to words) will bring an inwardly hungry, sad and disillusioned white race into the Faith in larger numbers. It is all there in the writings of Shoghi Effendi; we just don't think about it enough.

Nero fiddled while Rome burned. God forbid we Bahá'ís should ever be like that! A terrible sense of urgency has come over me. Take Africa alone: her nations are coming



into independence rapidly - which surely is the plan of God - but they are in danger internally and externally from immature, calculating political forces. What a difference it would make if there were at least ballast in their new ships launching on the world's turbulent sea, if there were a strong Bahá'í minority with their good will and vision of the future world, and the non-political quality of a Bahá'í community! And if these new and often turbulent African nations, being taught racial tensions in a world filled with hatred and ambition, could look across the seas and see that in America and Canada there is a community truly representative of the different races, where the Indian and the Negro Bahá'ís march abreast with those of European descent in serving mankind and promulgating Bahá'u'lláh's redeeming Faith; think what a force for stability in the whole world this might be! Are we Bahá'ís thinking about those things? Or are we for the most part absorbed in playing with the Administrative Order, criticizing, judging and disputing with each other? Do we constantly bear in mind that as early as the start of the first Seven Year Plan the Guardian told us that now that we had built up the Administrative machinery we must put it into operation, for teaching the Cause? That Bahá'u'lláh has commanded all His followers to teach the Faith? That the Guardian made it clear in communications to National Assemblies both East and West, that the monies of the Faith must be spent on winning the specific goals of the Crusade and not dissipated on other things of secondary importance at this time? Forgive me if I seem impassioned on this subject, but I am very distressed because I feel we are in a race and not conscious of it. What answer are we all going to give in the next world if Bahá'u'lláh, the Master and the Guardian say to us: "but We told you all about it, we told you what to do, why didn't you do it?"

I would like to make an observation about teaching the Indians and the Negroes. It is the result of as much analysis as I am capable of. When we Bahá'ís go to teach these people, our first act, I firmly believe, should be to try and give them back their self-respect. Probably the greatest crime of the white man is that in his folly and conceit in the great power of his money - civilization, he has made other men feel inferior; 2nd, 3rd and 4th class passengers on the boat of life. How deep this acid has bitten into the souls of other men I suppose we white people can never know. But I was startled and moved by something I saw during my African trip. Invariably, whenever I mentioned this injustice of ours, and denounced it as such, there was a spontaneous burst of applause from my listeners whether at the Teaching Conference in Kampala where the cream of the African Bahá'í teachers was present, or an illiterate audience way out in the Bush seated under a tree! The arrow is far deeper in the hearts than we dream and we Bahá'ís should draw this arrow, in the name of Bahá'u'lláh, and pour the healing salve of His Praises and love into the wound.

I could see the American Indians straighten their shoulders when I asked their forgiveness for the injustices my race had done them and when I praised their great past. The Africans in their wilderness have not, thank God, suffered this humiliation of soul the Indian has because they have been too far away, for the most part, from white people. But they look wistfully at our world and wonder why they have no part. This touched me deeply and I tried to tell them as much as I could about the history of Africa. Again the need to reestablish self-respect. Both the Africans and the Indians should be encouraged

to retain their tribal characteristics, their language, their music, their folklore, and their crafts. What a people is has grown up in its setting of tribal customs and qualities. If you destroy this through criticism you also, I believe, weaken and destroy all the fine qualities of the race too. It's a large subject and this is not the place to go into it, but all one has to do is to study primitive people in their own lives and in our cities or after close contact with us to see the truth.

There is one other subject I would like to share with you some of my thoughts on, and this is education. One of the products of our Western Civilization is a worship of education. From the Bahá'í standpoint what is the purpose of education? To enable man to acquire a deeper knowledge of God, His ways and His plan for His creatures; to enable him to better carry forward an ever-advancing civilization whose aim is to realize the Kingdom of God on earth. In other words, education should bring man closer to God and help him serve his fellow-man. Our education does not do this nowadays. It seems often to do the very opposite. It fill men's hearts with a learning that far from bringing people closer to God, seem to take them further and further away from Him! I hate to say the more the Bahá'ís educate their children the less they seem to serve the Faith. Present-day education seems to destroy the spiritual qualities. It is not what is taught so much as that the emphasis is all wrong, placed on the wrong values. If the purpose of human existence is to know God and to acquire those characteristics which, after a short life in this world are needed for an everlasting existence in another world, how are we accomplishing this? I have heard a lot of gossip about the fact that these new, illiterate-for-the-most-part, African Bahá'ís are not well grounded in the Faith. If to be a Bahá'í is to know all the teachings, I don't suppose there is a single Bahá'í alive, since the Guardian passed away, because none of us know all the teachings and few of us grasp the ones we do know.

The foundation of all religions is to accept the Manifestation of God and believe what He taught is God's truth. If one believes this, then the moment one comes across a teaching one has not heard about before, one accepts it because Bahá'u'lláh is the Mouthpiece of God and God is always right. It is this quality of faith the African believers are being taught and are capable of. The doctrine of salvation through accepting the Manifestation of God exists in our Faith just as much as Christianity. But are we teaching the Cause this way in the West? I am afraid not. I remember talks I have given (and listened to) which were a sort of intellectual jargon that went on and on elaborating on the working of a society which does not yet exist, giving supposedly full details of a system a little over a hundred years old but which must evolve during at least a thousand years!

We must guard ourselves against the dry and dead intellectualism of the world in which we live! Over and over the Guardian told the Bahá'ís to study the talks of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and teach by His methods, simple language, parables, stories, examples. It is teaching through this method that is bringing about mass conversion in Africa and Indonesia, and can do the same, I believe, not only amongst the red Indians and the Negroes, but amongst the white people as well.

Another thing I found in Africa was love. Considering it is the reason God created us and His first law to us is to love Him and one another, to find not just talk about it but the feeling of it was too wonderful for words! If we will bring into the Faith more of

these people - these black people and brown people - who have the spiritual qualities so greatly needed in our communities, I think we will infuse a new life into the Cause in North America and this will directly assist us in accomplishing our great destiny as outlined by the Master and the Guardian.

Both the Indians and Africans are very devout and prayerful people. Far more so than we. In the meetings held for me in the villages in Kenya and Uganda, organized and conducted by the African teachers, I was surprised at the number of prayers said. One day when our party was about to get in the car and drive off, the African teacher with us called me back into our host's house because he said firmly we were going to say some prayers before we left! The Indians pray and commune far more than we dream of!

I would like to share with you just a few glimpses into what Africa and the new African Bahá'ís is like. In one of the day-long meetings where people had come long distances, mostly on foot, one of the African teachers had a parcel. He said he wanted to give me a present, though it was a very humble one. He unwrapped a clay cooking pot and said there is a story about this pot which I want to tell you. When I was a boy, I was very naughty once and my father beat me badly so I decided to run away from home into the Bush. My mother called after me, "You may run away but my pot will bring you home again." That night, out in the Bush, I got very hungry and I remembered my mother's cooking pot on the fire and I went home and she was right, her pot brought me back. Now, he said, in this pot are the laws of Bahá'u'lláh. The people of the world are going to get hungry and they will be forced to come and eat from this pot.

The Bahá'ís write many songs in their own languages and sing them with beautiful voices. One of the latest is to the effect that in 1963 the Universal House of Justice is going to be established at the World Center in the Holy Land.

On my last night in a newly-opened district, where no white Bahá'ís had ever been and which adjoins a large pagan area of Nandis, we held our meeting, as usual, under a big tree. There were a handful of the new Bahá'ís present, poor farmers living in a hilly wilderness, and some of their neighbors. Some of these were pagans. After the meeting and various speeches and questions and answers, one of these pagan men got up and said - please come and teach us more about your Faith, it seems to be a good thing and we would like to hear about it. - After hearing about it more, if we think it is true, we will accept it. We all sat up until about 11 o'clock, and yet, when I woke up about 4 in the morning I heard soft voices coming from one of the other huts and the word "Bahá'u'lláh" every now and then. When I asked the Bahá'í teacher with us (who had opened this area) what had been going on he said the Bahá'ís and some of their friends who had stayed the night had so many questions they preferred not to sleep but to talk! One of the Bahá'ís had bicycled 30 miles to be there with these new teachings. We left him behind as he was going to make a tour and do some more teaching before going home.

Five dollars and fifty cents will keep one of these teachers in the field a month. It is rather terrifying is it not, when we see how we waste money daily on luxuries in the name of "our way of life," both as individuals and as Bahá'í administrators and the Guardian, our beloved Guardian, told us now was the time for mass conversion!

I must really stop.

Thank you all for your love and your many kindnesses shown me when I was there last year. It was a joy to see you all, and all the dear faithful believers who are so sincere, so longing to be more effective in service, I am sure there is no limit to what can be done. We have the promises of the Guardian, the instructions he gave us, the loyalty and devotion of the Bahá'ís, what more do we need but self-sacrificing and inspired leadership, and that is surely what your two Assemblies can and must provide.

With warmest love to you all,

In the service of the beloved Guardian, (signed) RUHIYYIH, Haifa, Israel, March 9, 1961 (U.S. Supplement, Bahá'í News, No. 40 Bahá'í Year 118 June 1961)

## **2. A Message to the Indian & Eskimo Bahá'ís of the Western Hemisphere: March 16, 1969**

### **TO THE INDIAN AND ESKIMO BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE AMERICAN CONTINENT**

#### **MY ESPECIALLY LOVED BROTHERS AND SISTERS**

In these days when I arise before dawn and begin the Fast given to us by God as an added sign of His mercy in this age of Bahá'u'lláh, my thoughts go out to you with particular intensity, to you all, my brothers and sisters in the Cause of God. I remember my visit some years ago to the Navajos and to the Hopis in the United States and to the Blackfoot Indians in Canada, who gave me my beautiful Indian name, Natu-Okcist (Blessed Mother) and last year to the Chaco. the Guaymi and Kuna friends in Panama, to the Aymara and Quechua peoples in Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador, to the Mapuche brothers and sisters in Chile, to the new-found Mataco friends in Argentina, to the group of Maca believers in Paraguay, to the many brothers and sisters among the Guajiras in Venezuela and Colombia and last but not least my dear Motilone friends in the mountains near Valledupar, Colombia, and I cannot describe to you how much I long to be with you again. As I write these words the tears come to my eyes, so deep is my love for you, so keen the sense that we are true brothers and sisters.

It has come to my mind that many of you do not know the destiny God has ordained for you in this age of His supreme mercy showered upon all mankind and that is one reason I am writing this general letter to all my old friends, and to the many Indian and Eskimo believers I have not had the opportunity to see or visit. The other reason is to send you my love and good wishes on the eve of our Bahá'í New Year, March 21st.

My friends, how can I convey to you the bounties of Almighty God showered upon your people in this day? And you ask yourselves, what people? We, the Mapuches, or we the Kunas? The answer is a wonderful one: the world is divided into two halves, two sides; on one of its sides, stretching between two seas, have lived the Indian and Eskimo peoples for countless thousands of years. This side was their homeland. This homeland is such a vast distance that it would take a

man at least two years to walk from one end to the other if he could walk every day fast and uninterrupted —but there are so many mountains, rivers and deserts in between, that it would take him more than ten years! All of you tribes, and many, many hundreds more whose names I have not mentioned here because I have not been fortunate enough to visit them, are one great people, the Indian people of the American Continent. The Eskimo people of the extreme north are a different cousin-people but also belong to what the white man calls the "New World" because hundreds of years ago, when he sailed from his homeland across the seas to your homeland it was for him a new world. But for you, of course, it was an old world, your own homeland.

As you well know we men are not always kind to each other. We do not love each other as brothers. We have fought against each other and taken the land and homes and hunting grounds of each other as far back as memory goes. When the white man went to the Redman's half of the world hundreds of years ago, he fought against and defeated the Redman. This you all know. It was not a good thing he did, but he acted as men have in the past, taking away from people who were different from himself what he wanted because he was stronger. The reason he was stronger was not because his character was nobler and better but because his weapons were newer and better and he had gun powder which was unknown to the Redman. It is a very long story and we cannot go into it here. The reason I am mentioning it is because if you do not remember these facts about your own history, facts you yourself may not even know, you will not be able to understand how very great is the glad tiding God has sent you in this day through His Messenger, Bahá'u'lláh, and you will not grasp the importance for you of what is written in the Bahá'í teachings for you and about you.

But before I tell you this I want to tell you that I am sure a day will come when the Redman will study and know the history of his people; the white man has been studying the Redman's history now for 400 years and the more he studies the more he admires you. You are a great race. Your people in the New World, before the white man came, built mighty cities, beautiful cities and temples. You made with your hands wonderful statues and vessels of pottery, of gold, of silver and of jewels, as well a dresses and head-dresses of bead work. and feathers, of woven wool and other materials. So beautiful were the ornaments you made of all these materials, that the white man has collected them in special houses where thousands of people pay to enter and look at them and the school children are taken on special trips to see them. Other people in the world are more and more studying the history of the Redman, finding where his ancient cities and temples are hidden in the jungles, the mountains and the plains, uncovering them so that people may visit them and marvel at the greatness of the works of the Redman.

You must never feel that you are an inferior people, a people without knowledge. My friends, each of us has 5 fingers on his hand. We know that we need each one of our fingers. There are red men, black men, white men, brown men and yellow men (as we call them in our language) in this world; they are like the fingers of the hand, each one needed, each one a part of the same hand. How much our work would suffer if we lost one finger! We are like the children of one father who has placed his sons in different houses throughout the world. In this day the heavenly Father of us all, Bahá'u'lláh, has come looking for his beloved sons. He calls to them to come to Him for He has prepared a great feast on the occasion of His homecoming and wants His sons all gathered at His table to eat of His bounty together. You red men, you Indians and Eskimos of the New World, are one of those sons and you are being called by the voice of God to come and eat your share now. This is not

a small thing. This is the greatest thing that has happened to you. This is shining upon you like the sun in the noon day heaven, so do not be blind to this blessed light!

Now let me tell you what is in the Bahá'í teachings on this subject which concerns you so deeply. The One Who came before Baha'u'llah, His Forerunner, Who was to Him as John the Baptist was to Jesus Christ, the One Who announced Him, already over 125 years no, far away from your land, on the other side of the world, called the people of the West, and this included the red men as well as the white men, to arise and aid God and become as brothers in God's religion which today is the religion of Bahá'u'lláh. This was the first call to you. Then Bahá'u'lláh Himself wrote and addressed the rulers of the American Continent, your homeland, and called upon them to recognize Himself Who had been sent by God in this day and enjoined upon them to deal justly and to fear God and remember God. This was a great honour to the nations of the New World that Bahá'u'lláh should address their rulers in such words. There are also other words of Bahá'u'lláh about the peoples of the West, and you are part of the many peoples of the West—indeed the red men, not the white men, are the true and original people of the West. So we may call the words of Bahá'u'lláh the second call to you.

The beloved son and successor of Bahá'u'lláh, Who was known as the Master, not only blessed the New World by visiting it but travelled from its East Coast to its West Coast in the United States and Canada. He wrote many wonderful things about the greatness and future of your homeland and its people. Among them are these words: "The continent of America is, in the eyes of the one true God, the land wherein the splendors of His light shall be revealed, where the mysteries of His Faith shall be unveiled, where the righteous will abide and the free assemble." See how great is the future of that half of the world which is your homeland! Because 'Abdu'l-Bahá was a very old man in frail health and there were no aeroplanes in His days, He was only able to visit North America. He told the followers of Bahá'u'lláh in that part of your continent: "Your mission is unspeakably glorious" and he assured them that if they made efforts to carry this message of God, which Bahá'u'lláh has brought to us in this age, to other peoples and nations then everyone would sing the praises of the greatness of this American Bahá'í Community. You Indian and Eskimo believers in North America are members of that Community. Your destiny as Bahá'ís is the same as that of other Bahá'ís, for there is no distinction, the sure promise affects all. And you Eskimo and Indian believers of Alaska and Canada, you Indian believers of Central and South America, you are part of those peoples addressed by the Báb, by Bahá'u'lláh, by His son the Master, called 'Abdu'l-Bahá. And 'Abdu'l-Bahá's many words to the Bahá'ís of the West are, we may say, the third call to you.

But your people, the red men, have been singled out for a special promise by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, a promise that is in many ways unique, a deep promise the words of which you can never ponder upon sufficiently and which I believe you should commit to memory. You are, many of you I know, faced by heavy problems: injustice, poverty, lack of education. If you could see with the eye of the spirit you would see that this promise of 'Abdu'l-Bahá is like a rope put in the hand of a man who has fallen in deep water and cannot swim. If you hold to this promise it will pull you, perhaps not you yourself at once, but slowly and surely your children and grandchildren out of the water to safely and is this not better than just saving yourself alone?

What `Abdu'l-Bahá wrote was this: "You must attach great importance to the Indians, the original inhabitants of America" and this was followed by His sure promise to you: "Should these Indians be educated and properly guided, there can be no doubt that through the Divine teachings they will become so enlightened that the whole earth will be illuminated." How is it 'Abdu'l-Bahá said such a wonderful thing about your people? Over 50 years ago He wrote to the Bahá'ís in North America — in those days the message of Bahá'u'lláh had not reached Central and South America — and instructed them to go forth and teach this wonderful message to other nations and peoples. And He reminded them that in a past time, when God had sent one of His Divine Messengers to educate men spiritually, that Messenger had appeared among a very backward and ignorant people. But they memorized the words given them and these words entered their minds and their souls and filled them with such light and knowledge that that people became a great and famous people and carried the light they had received all over the world, and He likens your people to that other people who changed the world. Now you see how very great is this promise of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, for He says if you Indians accept Bahá'u'lláh's message and take His words and teachings into your minds and souls you will be a means of casting light upon the entire world. What a blessing has been given to you, my friends. This we may say is the fourth call to you. Know its worth.

'Abdu'l-Bahá likewise did not forget to mention the Eskimo brothers and sisters and promised that when this message of Bahá'u'lláh is shared with them the effect will be very great and its influence spread very far.

And now we come to days that are closer to us. You know that God, in this day, when He has sent the Father in our midst, has blessed us as never before. He gave us the Báb, the Herald, He gave us Bahá'u'lláh, the Father, He gave us 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the son of Bahá'u'lláh, to guide and interpret for us the words of Bahá'u'lláh, and when 'Abdu'l-Bahá died He appointed for us as Guardian, guide and interpreter of our teachings His own dear, eldest grandson, whose name was Shoghi Effendi. Shoghi Effendi's words to the Indians and about the Indians and the Eskimos are very important and dear friends, these are the fifth call addressed to you. So see how richly you have been blessed by God in this day!

In December 21, 1947, over 21 years ago, Shoghi Effendi replied to the first letter ever addressed to him by Indian Bahá'ís. It was from a group of the Omaha tribe of Indians in Macy, Nebraska, in the United States. Shoghi Effendi wrote to them in his own handwriting saying

*Your joint message filled my heart with joy and gratitude. I welcome your historic letter, and regard it as a landmark in the history of our beloved Faith. I will pray for every one of you from the depth of my heart, and will supplicate the Almighty to bless and sustain you and aid you to deepen your knowledge of the Faith and promote effectively its best interests. Persevere in your task, and rest assured that Bahá'u'lláh will watch over you and guide you.*

*Your true brother,  
SHOGHI.*

It was the custom of our beloved Guardian Shoghi Effendi to instruct his secretary what to answer in the first part of the letter and then Shoghi Effendi himself would add in his own writing a special message. What you have just read is Shoghi Effendi's message; now I will quote what I

who was his wife and acted as his secretary wrote in the first part of that letter because this letter was, as Shoghi Effendi says, an historic one, the first one to Indian brothers and sisters.

*Dear Bahá'í Friends:*

*Our beloved Guardian has received your letter to him, dated October 22nd, with feelings of great joy and he has instructed me to answer it on his behalf.*

*The original population of the United States was very dear to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's heart, and he foretold for the Indians a great future if they accepted and became enlightened by the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh*

*To believe in the Mouthpiece of God in His Day confers very great blessings, not only on individuals, but on races, and he hopes that you who are now numbered amongst the followers of Bahá'u'lláh will give His Message to many more of your tribe, and in this way hasten for your people a bright and happy future.*

*You may be sure he will pray for each and every one of you, that God may bless and protect your lives and increase your numbers.*

*With warmest Bahá'í love,*

*R. RABBANI*

I am absolutely sure that had each one of you been able to write our Guardian during his lifetime he would have replied to each one of you with the same sentiments of love he has expressed here, the same joy in welcoming you as his brothers and sisters, the same instructions to teach and spread the message of Bahá'u'lláh among your own tribes? So please take his letter as your own letter from him. So precious to Shoghi Effendi was the enrollment of members representing different tribes of Indians and Eskimos that he kept a separate list of their names and was very proud of it and hastened to add each new tribe as news reached him that a member of it had become a follower of Bahá'u'lláh and accepted His message.

Now I want to share with you some of the many words of Shoghi Effendi regarding the Indians and the Eskimos. You must remember that because many of your white Bahá'í brothers and sisters came from the big cities, where most of the people have gone to schools and can read and write, they were usually the first to hear about Bahá'u'lláh and accept him and this is why Shoghi Effendi so repeatedly and insistently has urged them to go out and carry the message of Bahá'u'lláh to other people, especially those living far away and in the country. All the time Shoghi Effendi urged all the Bahá'ís, the Indian Bahá'ís also, as you see in his letter to the Omaha Indians, to teach this Faith to others.

In 1952, when word reached Shoghi Effendi that in Canada some of the Bahá'ís were teaching this faith to the Eskimos and the Indians his secretary wrote at his instruction to the Canadian National Bahá'í Assembly that "The Guardian was most happy to hear of the excellent work some of the Bahá'ís are doing with the Eskimos and the Indians, and considers their spirit most exemplary. They are rendering a far greater service than they, themselves, are aware of, the fruits of which



will be seen, not only in Canada, but because of their repercussions, in other countries where primitive populations must be taught."

From these years when the first Indians and Eskimos were being attracted to this Faith and accepting Bahá'u'lláh until the time when he passed away in 1955 Shoghi Effendi refers to this subject many times in letters to National Bahá'í Assemblies throughout the length of the entire American Continent which is your own homeland. In another letter to the Canadian Assembly he speaks of "the strenuous yet highly meritorious obligation to add, steadily and rapidly, to the number of the American Indian and Eskimo adherents of the Faith, and to ensure their active participation in both the teaching and administrative spheres of Bahá'í activity — a task so clearly emphasized by the Pen of the Centre of the Covenant ('Abdu'l-Bahá), and in the consummation of which the Canadian Bahá'í Community is destined to play so conspicuous a part."

In a letter to the Alaskan National Assembly Shoghi Effendi says "Nor must the vital obligation of converting, as speedily as possible, both the Eskimos and the American Indians, who, as time passes, must assume a notable share in the diffusion of the Faith and the establishment of its rising Order in those regions, be, under any circumstances neglected..."

As early as 1945, two years before the letter from the Omaha Indians reached him, Shoghi Effendi's secretary had written on his behalf that "He has always been very anxious to have the Indians taught and enlisted under the banner of the Faith, in view of the Master's remarkable statements about the possibilities of their future and that they represent the aboriginal American population."

His secretary wrote the National Assembly in Central America in 1951 that "Shoghi Effendi is also most anxious for the Message to reach the aboriginal inhabitants of the Americas. These people, for the most part down-trodden and ignorant, should receive from the Bahá'ís a special measure of love, and every effort be made to teach them. Their enrollment in the Faith will enrich them and us, and demonstrate our principle of the Oneness of Man far better than words or the wide conversion of the ruling races ever can."

To the National Assembly of South America he wrote that same year, through his secretary, expressing similar thoughts. "The Guardian feels that special efforts must be made to enroll the primitive peoples of South America in the Cause. These souls, often so exploited and despised, deserve to hear of the Faith, and will become a great asset to it once their hearts are enlightened."

In 1957, during the last months of his life, in letters of great importance to different National Bahá'í Assemblies throughout the American Continent — the last letters they were ever to receive from their beloved Guardian — he again emphasized the extreme importance of this subject, speaking of the "long overdue conversion" of both the Indian and Eskimo peoples to this Faith, saying that a fresh impetus must be given to the work of "the conversion of the American Indians" and that it should receive the "close and uninterrupted attention of all those" who were primarily responsible for carrying out the plan then being undertaken.

Shoghi Effendi's secretary wrote on his behalf to the National Assembly of the United States that "He understands from some pilgrims who have arrived since the annual Convention was held and who were present on that occasion, that there are many volunteers who offered to go out and teach the American Indians. This is a particularly important phase of Bahá'í activity, and long a sadly neglected one, and he urges your Assembly to do everything in its power to facilitate these believers, desirous of teaching the Indians, getting to their posts as soon as possible."

To the National Bahá'í Assemblies of Latin America, during the last years of his life, he wrote with his own hand that "The efforts exerted to enroll a great number of American Indians under the banner of the Faith must be redoubled. The translation of Bahá'í literature into the Spanish, the Portuguese and the Indian languages must be given a tremendous impetus..."; "The translation of Bahá'í literature into the Spanish and Indian American languages, its publication and dissemination, should likewise be carried out with efficiency and vigour. The all-important enterprise, aimed at winning the whole-hearted allegiance of the members of the various tribes of American Indians to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh, and at ensuring their active and sustained participation in the conduct of its administrative affairs, must, likewise be seriously considered and strenuously pursued." "The translation, publication and dissemination of Bahá'í literature in both the Spanish and American Indian languages.. .the acceleration of the process of converting the Negroes as well as the American Indians, and of encouraging them to take an active part in teaching the Faith to the members of their respective races, and to participate effectively in the administration of its affairs — these constitute additional and vital obligations which should, under no circumstances, be lost sight of nor be, for a moment, underrated..."

In 1957 Shoghi Effendi informed the Latin American National Assemblies, through his secretary, that "special attention must be focused on the work of converting the Indians to the Faith. The goal should be all-Indian assemblies, so that these much exploited and suppressed aboriginal inhabitants of the land may realize that they are equals and partners in the affairs of the Cause of God, and that Bahá'u'lláh is the Manifestation of God for them." "He was particularly happy to see that some of the Indian believers were present at the Convention. He attaches the greatest importance to teaching the original inhabitants of the Americas the Faith. 'Abdul-Bahá Himself has stated how great are their potentialities, and it is their right, and the duty of the non-Indian Bahá'ís, to see that they receive the Message of God for this day. One of the most worthy objectives of your Assembly must be the establishment of all-Indian Spiritual Assemblies."

Shoghi Effendi had a plan, which he uninterruptedly pursued throughout the years, aimed at not only bringing the Redman into the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, but of ensuring that when he did become a Bahá'í he should exert his rights and privileges and assume his duties and responsibilities the same as any other Bahá'í, of any other tribe or race, in any part of the world. In 1947, in a detailed letter to the North American Baha'is, Shoghi Effendi shows how much importance he attaches to the Indian tribes throughout the length and breadth of the New World hearing about and accepting Bahá'u'lláh. "The initial contact already established, in the concluding years of the first Bahá'í century, in obedience to 'Abdu'l-Baha's mandate with the Cherokee and Oneida Indians in North Carolina and Wisconsin, with the Patagonian, the Mexican and the Inca Indians. and the Mayans in Argentina, Mexico, Peru and Yucatan, respectively, should, as the Latin American Bahá'í communities gain in stature and strength, be consolidated and extended. A special effort should be exerted to secure the unqualified adherence of members of some of their tribes to the Faith, their

subsequent election to its councils, and their unreserved support of the organized attempts that will have to be made in the future by the projected National Assemblies for the large-scale conversion of Indian races to the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh."

Not only did Shoghi Effendi attach the greatest importance to those who, at that time, were mostly Bahá'ís belonging to the white race going out to teach the Indians and Eskimos, he longed for the day when you would arise and teach your own people this Faith. These words written at his instruction by his secretary make this very clear: "He was gratified to see the large numbers of tribes which had been recently contacted in connection with the teaching of the Faith. However, he is very anxious that these contacts be changed into converts for the Faith. As you know, he attaches the utmost importance to the teaching of the American Indians; and he hopes your Committee will concentrate to see that actual converts are made among these tribes, so that the converts themselves can in turn teach their own people. He hopes that you will be able to give him in the near future a further report of conversions which have been made amongst these various tribes," and the joy of Shoghi Effendi when he heard that one of the Indian Bahá'ís had travelled hundreds of kilometres to go back to his own tribe and teach its members this good message from Bahá'u'lláh is shown in these words of Shoghi Effendi's secretary written in 1950 to the Canadian National Assembly: "The work being done by various Bahá'ís, including our dear Indian believer who returned from the United States in order to pioneer amongst his own people, in teaching the Canadian Indians, is one of the most important fields of activity under your jurisdiction. The Guardian hopes that ere long many of these original Canadians will take an active part in Bahá'í affairs and arise to redeem their brethren from the obscurity and despondency into which they have fallen."

And now my beloved brothers and sisters I come to the part of this letter that makes me the happiest to write. What can you yourselves do to win the good pleasure of God, to attract upon your people, your tribes, your families and your descendants His great blessings? Teach His Cause, this is your duty, this is your great privilege! Some of you are very well educated people, in North America not only reading and writing in English, and in Central and South America in Spanish and Portuguese, but masters of your own native Indian tongues as well; and you have seen from the Guardian's words that he attached so much importance to your own languages he wished Bahá'í books to be translated and published in them. However, many of you dear friends, I know, do not know how to read and write at all and some one is reading these words to you and as you listen a feeling of sorrow comes into your heart and you say to yourself "What can I do, poor one that I am?" But there is no cause for this sorrow and I will prove this to you from the words of our Guardian, who based all he said on the words of our Father, Bahá'u'lláh. Our Guardian wrote: "How often - and the early history of the Faith in the land of its birth offers many a striking testimony - have the lowliest adherents of the Faith, unschooled and utterly inexperienced, and with no standing whatever, and in some cases devoid of intelligence, been capable of winning victories for their Cause, before which the most brilliant achievements of the learned, the wise, and the experienced have paled."

Now in the world today there is a great increase in schools and many more people can read and write than in the past. But this must never be confused with wisdom and knowledge. For thousands of years most men could never read or write, even the great chiefs and leaders, even Jesus Christ the Son of God could not read or write and many more of the holiest men who ever lived were illiterate. To not be able to read or write was normal, to be able to read and write was very

exceptional; therefore we must never be ashamed we cannot read or write. We must seek to learn to read and write if this is possible, but never consider that because we cannot do so we are inferior. My friends, look at the world around you: admittedly there are many great things the white man has created and much of it is good, but what about all the evil he is creating? What about his terrible wars, his cruelty, his bad conduct, his lying and cheating and immorality and shamelessness — yet he reads and writes very well! So we must realize that to be a noble human being, a good man or woman, not to lie, not to steal, not to be cruel is more important than reading or writing and it makes me sad to have to confess that in the cities of the white man, with all his money and education, his conduct is much worse than the conduct of my Indian brothers and sisters in the villages, who are poor but believe in God, who are illiterate but still believe man has a spirit that goes on after death and whose moral standard is much higher than that of the people of the cities. Shoghi Effendi wrote these words through his secretary many years ago; they show how well he understood you and your problems and in what terms he spoke to the white Bahá'ís about you:

*It is a great mistake to believe that because people are illiterate or live primitive lives, they are lacking in either intelligence or sensibility. On the contrary, they may well look on us, with the evils of our civilization, with its moral corruption, its ruinous wars, its hypocrisy and conceit, as people who merit watching with both suspicion and contempt. We should meet them as equals, well-wishers, people who admire and respect their ancient descent, and who feel that they will be interested, as we are, in a living religion and not in the dead forms of present-day churches.*

Therefore friends, I beg of you never be ashamed of yourselves. You were created by God a great people, and God, through the message of Bahá'u'lláh, is calling you to meet the great destiny He has in store for you in this day. Ponder these wonderful words of Bahá'u'lláh, promising to each one of us who accepts Him and serves Him an everlasting joy and happiness: "O my servants! Sorrow not if, in these days and on this earthly plane, things contrary to your wishes have been ordained and manifested by God, for days of blissful joy, of heavenly delight, are assuredly in store for you. Worlds, holy and spiritually glorious, will be unveiled to your eyes."

We Bahá'ís belong to what Shoghi Effendi called an all-embracing Bahá'í fraternity. He told us that we must call upon all men to enter into this great system, this great fraternity of Bahá'u'lláh, because it is destined for all men, was made by God in this day to suit all men. No matter what the colour of their skins, their past religions, their political beliefs, the languages they speak or the tribes and nations they belong to, we must call them to come to Bahá'u'lláh. In this day, accept His message and receive His laws which will bring justice and peace, love and brotherhood into the world.

One of the fundamental teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is that the brotherhood of men is not to be made of men who are all alike, but men who are all different. Think of your own children, how terrible it would be if they all looked exactly alike! If each one had a face like the other so you could not tell them apart! How happy you are to see them different, to see the nose of one is larger, the eyes of another longer, the lips of a third one fuller, the cheeks of a fourth one fatter! So we Bahá'ís believe it is with the children of God, each people is different, each has his own colour, his own language, his own looks, his own gifts and to God they are all His children, no one to be loved more than another, each one wanted and needed in the family of man. When we Bahá'ís teach we must teach these things. Shoghi Effendi said we men of all races are like the thread in

the cloth, each thread is different. When we are woven together by Bahá'u'lláh's teachings then His design, the great design of the Father for this day, will come out and be seen in all its beauty.

Shoghi Effendi said another thing which is of great importance to you Indians and Eskimos who are not white men. In the last months of his life, through the words of his secretary in his letter to one of the National Assemblies in your part of the world, he said that "the degree to which all over the world the Bahá'í Community is becoming representative of the vast majority of the human race, in other words, non-whites, is very salutary." What he is saying is very important and you must ponder it deeply, for it means this is not a white man's religion for white men, but a religion for all men and the majority of men are not white. In that same letter his important views on another subject are expressed: "You must help the believers to realize that ultimately it is upon each individual that the progress of the Faith depends. The Bahá'ís are prone to attaching too much emphasis to their being on Assemblies and Committees. This kind of work is essential, because somebody has to do it, but it is not the most important part. The individual responsibility to teach the Faith is the most important thing of all, and this has been clearly pointed out by Bahá'u'lláh Himself."

Perhaps, like all of us, you will make the excuse that you are not qualified, that you are ignorant of the teachings, that you have no tongue to speak and summon men to God. But Shoghi Effendi has already given this answer to all your excuses, in a letter he wrote shortly before he left this world, to the National Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, through his secretary: "...It is not enough for the friends to make the excuse that their best teachers and exemplary believers have arisen and answered the call to pioneer. A 'best teacher' and an 'exemplary believer' is ultimately neither more nor less than an ordinary Bahá'í who has consecrated himself to the work of the Faith, deepened his knowledge and understanding of its Teachings, placed his confidence in Baha'u'llah, and arisen to serve Him to the best of his ability. This door is one which we are assured will open before the face of every follower of the Faith who knocks hard enough, so to speak. When the will and the desire are strong enough, the means will be found..."

In his own words, Shoghi Effendi has expressed his desire for you. He wished the Indians, he wrote, "to take an active part in teaching the Faith to the members of their respective races, and to participate effectively in the administration of its affairs."

Twenty-two years ago Shoghi Effendi expressed the desire that when the countries of Latin America were in a position to have their own National Assemblies "the large-scale conversion of the Indian races to the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh" should be undertaken. That day, friends, has been reached and it is the time for your people to hear about Bahá'u'lláh and accept Him by the thousands. Who will tell them? The answer, my beloved brothers and sisters, must be you. Your white Bahá'í brothers and sisters will help you, but I firmly believe the greater part of this work must be undertaken by yourselves and there are many reasons for this. One is that we white people do not speak your languages which require much time for us to learn, and we do not seem to be very good at learning other peoples' languages. Another is that city people have lived so long away from the beautiful wilderness God has given to all men that most of them have forgotten how to live in that wilderness. Many of them are become soft and weak and become sick easily if they have to walk too much, or go without food, or sleep where they are not used to sleeping, or it is too hot or too cold. Therefore you who are stronger, and speak your own languages, must give this wonderful message of Bahá'u'lláh to your fellow Indians and Eskimos.

It will no doubt comfort you and interest you to know that Bahá'u'lláh, although He came of a wealthy family of great chiefs, walked in the wilderness for many months, slept on the ground, lived on a handful of food and patiently endured both extreme heat and extreme cold. He had the fortitude of the Redman and not the weakness of the white man. So friends, you must follow in Bahá'u'lláh's own footsteps and walk out to teach your own people His glad tidings in this new day we are living in.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, at that same period when he wrote of how great your peoples' destiny will be if they accept the message of Bahá'u'lláh, also wrote: "O, that I could travel, even on foot and in the utmost poverty, to these regions, and raising the call of `Ya Bahá'u'l-Abhá in cities, villages, mountains, deserts and oceans, promote the Divine teachings! This, alas, I cannot do. How immensely I deplore it! Please God, ye may achieve it." He was an old man at the end of His life when He wrote these words. But He called upon all of us to do it, so arise, dear friends, and heed His call!

When I was in Bolivia last year talking with some of my new Indian Bahá'í brothers they said they would like to teach their relatives and friends and tribes this Faith, but they knew nothing about it, so how could they? I said to them, "You know it is a message from God, don't you? And you know its purpose is to unite all men as brothers and bring peace into the world, don't you? And you know it is a good thing, don't you? So get up and go and tell others this good news and if you find they are eager to hear more, when one of your travelling teachers comes along to visit you next time, take him to see these people you have found who are eager to learn more of Bahá'u'lláh and His teachings and he will tell them more." This is the only way, friends, there is no other way. And this each one of you can do, and others who know more will help you, and as you teach, the great miracle will take place and you will find you know more to teach. This is the promise of Bahá'u'lláh to assist all those who arise to serve Him.

Bahá'u'lláh has taught us so much, and yet it is all very simple. Think of the sun. It is one sun and gives one light to everything everywhere in the world. But think of the thousands of things that grow in this world from that one sun and one light! If we plant potatoes, they will grow because of its light; if we plant corn it will grow because of its light; if we plant beans they will grow because of its light. Whatever we plant will grow because of its light. Its light is the answer to each thing. So is it with Bahá'u'lláh's heavenly light today. We must make the people realize the sun of God is come and is shining on everything and everyone. All the details of His teachings are like the thousands of things that will grow from the light. We can tell others, "Accept the light. Your answer is in His teachings and I will try to bring you soon one who will tell you in detail the answer to your questions." This kind of teaching all of you can do, even little children can teach this way.

Gradually increase your own knowledge of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings. If you can read, then read all you can of the Bahá'í books, over and over again. If you cannot, then listen to someone reading or speaking of them. Make an effort, a great effort if necessary, to go to the Bahá'í schools, classes, congresses and institutes so as to learn more and meet other Bahá'ís.

But above all pray to Bahá'u'lláh to enlighten you and guide you in His service and ponder His words. You will find that even a few words of His are like a seed that grows in your heart and mind. The reason for this is that as he is the Messenger of God, His words give life to the souls of

men. Take for instance these words of His, "You are all the leaves of one tree." If this sinks into your mind and heart, when you see a stranger you will say to yourself, "He is a leaf on the tree I am a leaf on", and this will make you kindly towards him. If your neighbour angers you, you will say to yourself, "Ah well, I suppose he is a leaf on the same tree, and I must be patient and forbearing!" When you see a white man and remember the past and perhaps feel afraid, indignant or resentful, you will say to yourself, "According to Bahá'u'lláh he is a leaf and I am a leaf and all the leaves on every tree are about the same size after all. He is a man like me who does good and evil, who lives and dies and we all go to be received and judged by the same God on high", and your heart will be more assured and peaceful. In other words, from these few words of Bahá'u'lláh, if you ponder them, many new thoughts will come into your mind and many better acts into your life; you will become both wiser and nobler through these few words. And we Bahá'ís are so rich, because we have thousands of words from Bahá'u'lláh!

God willing I will soon be setting out on a long journey to visit other leaves on our tree -- the brothers and sisters of the black race in Africa. Please pray for my visit to be of help to them, and that I may be strong enough to go to the far places and see them as I visited you when I travelled in your part of the world.

I send you my deepest love. You are always in my thoughts in my prayers, in my heart, my beloved brothers and sisters. (Signed) Rúhíyyih

### **3. The National Spiritual Assembly Of the Bahá'ís of Canada, 28 October 1986**

Very dear Bahá'í Friends,

Since our return to Israel on the 6th of October, there have been a great many things to attend to, as you can imagine, hence the delay in writing to tell you what a joy the whole Canadian trip was to me, how happy I was to meet with your Assembly in Pincher Creek, and to have the opportunity of being with various members of it on different occasions, particularly with dear David Hadden, who made the wonderful trip to the North, and various Indian centres, possible—indeed proposed it!

I particularly want to write you my feelings regarding the Indian Bahá'ís (and to a lesser extent the Eskimos as they are a much smaller group). I think the most valuable part of my trips to the Indian Reservations after Frobisher Bay was that they developed and strengthened in me certain ideas that have been growing for a long time. I am so seldom in North America and so seldom have any chance to think about these matters once I leave it, that it has taken far too much time to come to my present conclusions, which I feel it important to share with you. I have already shared them with the Universal House of Justice in my meeting with them upon my return to Haifa.

The significance, the explanation if you like, of the extraordinary prophesy of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the "Tablets of the Divine Plan": You must attach great importance to the Indians, the original inhabitants of America. ...should these Indians be educated and properly guided, there can be no doubt that through the Divine teachings they will become so enlightened that the whole earth will be illumined." has been brought home to

me during this last trip. As far as I know, this highly significant passage is the only “racial” prophecy in the Bahá’í Teachings. It is a pretty challenging thing to state that if a certain group of people accept the Message of Bahá’u’lláh they will become so enlightened that the whole earth will be illumined! An idea has been growing in my mind, greatly strengthened by the experiences of this last contact with the Indians; it is hard to put into words, but I think I should try and express it to you.

The Indians have a triangle, this is the way I express it in my own mind: the Most Great Spirit (God), man, and nature; they seem to have a profound inner understanding of this fundamental relationship in the universe; I think this relationship is supported in our Teachings, if we perhaps read them with a more understanding concept of this subject. The Indians are profoundly spiritual people—particularly those least affected by our civilization—with a tremendous orientation to prayer, to the Creator, on the one hand, and a deep rapport with nature on the other. The words of Bahá’u’lláh quoted by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá; “the city is the home of the body, the country is the home of the soul”, do not mean much to our race and certainly nothing to our civilization, but to the true Indian they are a deep reality. If you take the concept of this triangle, God, man, and nature, and you insert one more factor, between God and man, in other words the principle of the Ray, the intermediary or Prophet, that carries communion with the Great Spirit to us the Indians’ entire theology, if you like, or concept of life and the cosmos, become complete from the Bahá’í standpoint. I think we should approach the Indian teachings in this way. Too often, at least we white Bahá’ís are preoccupied with trying to place indigenous people, in this case the Indians, inside our own framework of what we think the Cause is. I think very few Bahá’ís of our type ever think much about theology! We think about administration, goals, plans, etc. Obviously all these things are important, but to attract the Indians by this approach is not working at all. Maybe in the end, with the insertion of the principle of the Manifestation of God, this Indian fundamental concept of theology is closer to the Teachings of Bahá’u’lláh than the way most of us understand them at present!

I need not tell you what a profound experience the Pipe Ceremony on the Peigan Reservation was. It was probably the most moving thing that happened to me in my whole trip, and one of the most moving things that happened to me in my whole life. As I could neither understand the Indian words nor clearly see what was happening, it was undoubtedly the profound spiritual feeling of the Indians connected with this most sacred ceremony that affected me.

You also know that the behavior of many of the Bahá’ís, particularly some of the Persian friends, was totally lacking in either patience or respect for this most holy ceremony of the Indians and showed no consideration for their feelings. When I spoke to the Bahá’ís of Regina they asked me to say something in Persian at the end of my talk, and I spoke as strongly as once can humanly do on the subject of not going near the Indians or approaching them or going to the Reservations unless they could treat them with respect and honour their customs and feelings. I pointed out that although some of the most active, successful, and much loved Bahá’í teachers in the whole of Canada amongst the Indians are Persians, the conduct of some of the others in Peigan was very detrimental to the Faith, that they as Bahá’ís would be very offended if people showed disrespect when



visiting our Holy Shrines at the World Centre, but we saw no reason why we should respect something that meant as much to them as that does to us. The talk was recorded, and if you want to get someone to translate these Persian remarks of mine, they might be of some use to you, if used in the right way.

The “Tablets of the Divine Plan” were given to us in 1919, almost 70 years ago; unlike South and Central America, we have done almost nothing to teach the indigenous people of the Americas in North America. In the meantime, I heard from Phil Lane that some of these Indian swami movements are very attractive now amongst the Indians, in other words, they are doing what we should be doing. It says in the Bible you cannot put new wine into old bottles which I have always understood to mean that when something was full there was no place to add it. If these people are going to fill the spiritual vacuum in the lives of the Indians, their longing for recognition of their culture and inner spiritual fulfillment, then would you mind telling me when we are going to fulfill the prophecy of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá? We Bahá’ís —and I am certainly old enough to assert this authoritatively— do nothing but miss busses; one bus after another whizzes by, and for one reason or another we are always going to catch the bus but too often we do not. Are we going to miss this Indian bus for the whole period of the Bahá’í Dispensation? I think you have to ask yourselves this very seriously. I know you have a tremendous amount of work, limited resources, and all the rest of it, but I firmly believe that every Bahá’í individually and the administrative bodies of the Faith as such, are obligated to consider priorities and to judge what should be done now or it will never happen.

Your Assembly has done a great deal more in recognizing the native believers of Canada than ever before, witness giving them a session at the Montreal Conference in 1982, your Assembly in toto meeting with them recently on the Peigan Reservation, your giving them an evening at the London, Ontario Association for Bahá’í Studies conference. All of us who were there remember how profoundly Dr. and Mrs. Lazlo were affected by the simplified Pipe Ceremony, and when I crossed the stage afterwards I saw how profoundly they were moved, she had tears in her eyes. Obviously this does not mean we must grace all Bahá’í occasions with the Pipe Ceremony! But it certainly should be an eye-opener to us. But my dear friends, it is not enough! I remember Shoghi Effendi telling the American pilgrims at the dinner table in the Western Pilgrim House that the American Bahá’ís were tainted with race prejudice; he said “they do not know that they are, but they are.” I think that this holds true also of the whole situation vis-à-vis the Indians in North America.

I am greatly preoccupied with this subject. I wonder whether, amongst the Persian Bahá’ís, cannot be found teachers of these people. I remember, I think it was Phil Lane, the subject coming up of how deeply the Indians crave prayer. Why could not a Persian friend, preferably middle aged or elderly, go to the Reservations, stay for a period and just hold dawn prayer gatherings? Many of these good Persian Bahá’ís, particularly the older ones, are sad at heart because they see no field in which to serve the Faith, they often have no command of English, but the love of the Faith in their hearts, their loyalty and grasp of the Teachings, their oriental warmth and demonstrativeness, can, I believe, be put to a marvelous use in this field. In the cities their capacities are never drawn upon

for obvious reasons, but with the Indians love, faith, prayers, courtesy, respect for the elders-all could work hopefully, miracles. You have this reservoir to draw upon.

(Signed) Rúhíyyih

Cc: The Universal House of Justice

The International Teaching Centre

National Spiritual Assembly of the United States.

(Rúhíyyih Khánum to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada dated October 28, 1986)

#### **4. The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, 28 October 1986**

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

I am sending you a copy of part of my recent letter to the Canadian Spiritual Assembly which is self-explanatory. Perhaps some of the thoughts and feelings expressed in it might be of use to you, so it occurred to me to pass it on to you.

I was very happy to be able to go to Pine Ridge on the Sioux Reserve. You remember you wanted me to do this, and as both my geography and my plans were very vague at the moment, I told you that I could not possibly fit it into my plan for the trip to Canada. One day David Hadden was about to fly us back to Toronto, he told me that we could go to Pine Ridge, that it would not be too far off our beat, and so, as you know, hurriedly arrangements were made. The fact that I got there at all was owing to him. It was a very happy experience for me. I was very impressed with those members of the new Spiritual Assemblies on the Reserve which I was able to meet, and happy to again be with Kevin Locke. However, one of the most satisfying things to me was to have many hours with dear Jacqueline Delahunt. It is a source of great satisfaction to me to see that your Assembly is now using such valuable servants of the Faith at the National Centre.

With warmest Bahá'í love to all of you,

(signed) RÚHÍYYIH

Rúhíyyih Khánum

enclosure