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## BISHOPS WORK FOR KATERI'S SAINTHOOD

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*They would like young native woman to be canonized at World Youth Day*

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In conjunction with World Youth Day 2002, Canadian bishops are hoping for the canonization of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha.

"She would be a model of inspiration, of encouragement for young people," the president of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Bishop Gerald Wiesner of Prince George, said in a Nov. 3 interview.

"She was a very young person who's a symbol of living faith," he said of Blessed Kateri, the first aboriginal person to be beatified.

The July 18-28, 2002, World Youth Day celebrations will be centered in Toronto.

In a meeting with Pope John Paul during the CCCB's officers' annual visit to the Vatican Oct. 26-Nov. 3, Wiesner said he brought up Blessed Kateri's sainthood cause.

"The Holy Father was quite enthusiastic," he said, "and he told us to take that" to the Congregation for Sainthood Causes.

Discussions with congregation officials were "encouraging and supportive," said Wiesner, "but they indicated what the norms are for sanctity."

As the conference's vice president, Bishop Jacques Berthelet of Saint Jean-Longueuil, pointed out, Blessed Kateri's cause still "needs a miracle."

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Beatified in 1980, Blessed Kateri was born to a Christian Algonquin mother and a Mohawk father in 1656 in what is now the state of New York.

She fled to Canada at the age of 20 for fear of retribution from neighbours hostile to her faith.

In what is now Kahnawake, Que., she devoted herself to serving needy native people. Blessed Kateri died in 1680.

In recent years, the Canadian Church has worked on developing ways to evangelize more aboriginal people as well as to make native Catholics feel more at home. The bishops said they are in contact with the Great Falls, Mont.-based Tekakwitha Conference to see how Canada can produce catechetical materials aimed at native people.

"Initiatives have been made and are being made on the local level," said Wiesner.

For example, he said the dioceses of Mackenzie-Fort Smith, N.W.T., and Prince George had developed materials that are "more pertinent to the aboriginal people."

But incorporating native culture into the life of the Church is a relatively new phenomenon, said Wiesner.

Previous ideas regarding native people tended toward "total integration," he said—a policy that has been criticized in recent times.

Such policies are also at the centre of lawsuits currently pending against government-established schools run by the Catholic and other churches.

Thousands of aboriginal people claim they were abused at the schools, which were founded at the turn of the century and phased out in the 1970s and 1980s, and bankruptcy scares have flared up in churches across Canada as they face mounting legal fees.

Aboriginal leaders have said the churches that ran the schools helped the government carry out its policy of "cultural genocide" against native people by setting up schools designed to assimilate natives into white society.