

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA
MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL
MINUTES
November 8, 2024

The 44th Executive of the General Council of The United Church of Canada met online November 8, 2024. The Moderator, Carmen Lansdowne, presided.

Attendance

Voting Members: Mitchell Anderson, , Richard Bott, Katherine Brittain, Teresa Burnett-Cole, M Chorney, Samuel Vauvert Dansokho, Paul Douglas Walfall, Catherine Glover, Carmen Lansdowne, David Leyton-Brown, Kit Loewen, Jane McDonald, Thea Sheridan-Jonah, Acting General Secretary Alan Hall

Corresponding Members: Kimberly Roy, Leeann Shimoda

Regrets: Arlyce Schiebout, Wilson Gonese, Alcris Limongi, Michael Caveney

Corresponding Staff: Michael Blair, Jennifer Henry, Springwater Hester-Meawassige, Lori-Ann Livingston, Lori Ransom, Cheryl-Ann Stadelbauer-Sampa

Friday, Nov 8, 2024

Welcome

The Moderator and Acting General Secretary welcomed those gathered for this meeting of the Executive.

Constituting the Meeting

The Moderator constituted the meeting in French and English.

"Au nom de Notre Seigneur, Jésus-Christ, seul chef souverain de l'Église, et par l'autorité qui m'a été conférée par le quarante-quatrième Conseil général, I hereby declare this meeting of the Executive of the General Council to be in session for the work that may properly be brought before it, to the glory of God."

Territory Acknowledgement

The Moderator shared a territory acknowledgement from her context and invited those present to indicate in the chat the lands on which they were situated for this meeting.

Staff Introductions

The Moderator welcomed the resource staff members. The Moderator noted that as the Executive is meeting to deal with a proposal coming from the Indigenous Commissioners feeling challenged by a decision from the General Secretary, the General Secretary has therefore asked

draft

Alan Hall to be the acting General Secretary for this meeting. The Moderator noted that due to the sensitivity of the meeting, only limited staff and corresponding members were present. The Moderator then invited everyone to introduce themselves.

Gathering Worship

The Moderator invited those present into a time of worship. She then read from Mark 12, and offered a word of hope. The Moderator invited Samuel Vauvert Dansokho to pray for the Executive.

GS 105 Procedural Motion

The Moderator invited Alan Hall, the Acting General Secretary to introduce the procedural motion. The Acting General Secretary briefly outlined the motion.

Motion: Alan Hall/David Leyton-Brown

2024-11-08-136

The General Secretary proposes that the General Council Executive:

1. Set the bounds of this meeting as this virtual meeting room in Zoom and the telephone connections to it.
2. Adopt the agenda for this meeting as circulated.
3. Receive for discussion and-& decision NEW 05 – Indigenous Sovereignty Proposal
4. Name as corresponding members to this meeting those named by Acting General Secretary to serve as resource persons to the General Council Executive.

Carried

Agenda Review

The chair of the Governance Committee, Kit Loewen, provided a brief overview of the agenda and reminded participants to leave their camera on if possible. She also noted regrets that had been received and named expected guests. She expressed her gratitude to all that could be at the meeting.

Equity Reminders

The Moderator introduced the equity aspirations.

Equity Aspirations

Remember to...

1. Question biases
2. Challenge assumptions
3. Notice who's missing
4. Value all voices
5. Aim for equity
6. Live out our commitments

...as we strive to live out God's call

Pour cibler l'équité

Assurez-vous...

1. de déceler les préjugés
2. de remettre en question les idées préconçues
3. de prendre conscience des absents
4. d'accorder une valeur à toutes les voix
5. de viser l'équité
6. de mettre en pratique nos engagements

...lorsque nous incarnons l'appel de Dieu

Purpose for this Special Meeting

The Moderator invited Kit Loewen, Governance Committee Chair, to provide the purpose for this special meeting of the Executive. She stated the purpose of this meeting is to decide how the Executive of the General Council wishes to respond in a principled way congruent with our governance role to NEW05. She brought forward ideas of process, staying in high levels of principles, and intentionality.

Report of the Governance Committee

The Acting General Secretary invited Lori Ransom and Springwater Hester-Meawassige to give background information that led to the dissolving of the National Indigenous Council (NIC) to the Executive.

Lori Ransom gave background to the Executive, largely from April 2023 to August 2024. She noted the struggles between council members early in 2024. She noted that, at the April 2024 meeting of the National Indigenous Council there was interpersonal conflict, and shortly after this meeting the Executive Minister went on leave. At the end of April, Michael Blair asked Lori to serve as Acting Executive Minister with regard to the NIC and Springwater to serve in this role covering the day to day responsibilities.

Shortly after this, Michael and Lori were met with communications from elders and members of the NIC expressing concern over what had happened at the April 2024 meeting. The General Secretary, conscious of his position as a settler in the church, was concerned with how to address this complex situation. After reviewing the situation with trusted Indigenous members within the United Church it was clear there needed to be a healing event.

Springwater shared that there were some challenges planning for people to come together for the healing event. People felt uncertainty, confusion, sadness. Some people even faced significant health challenges as a result.

The Moderator invited questions and there was considerable discussion among the Executive. Individuals who were part of the NIC during this time thanked Lori for her outline of the events.

GOV 04 Response to New 05 Indigenous Sovereignty Proposal

The Acting General Secretary invited Kit Loewen to give background on a possible way forward with a proposal from the Governance Committee.

The Acting General Secretary reiterated the church's commitment to an autonomous Indigenous church within the United Church and to finding a way forward that would be good for the Indigenous church. The importance of the relationship between the Indigenous church and the non-Indigenous

The Acting General Secretary noted that The Manual equated the National Indigenous Organization with a regional council and also provided that, in extraordinary circumstances the General Council can assume the responsibilities of a regional council (The Manual C-NIO.1.2; D.2.5).

The Governance Committee, in reviewing the matter in preparation for today's Executive meeting, sensed that the dysfunction was significant and that the best option was to bring together the Indigenous church by hosting a National Indigenous Spiritual Gathering to enable the Indigenous church to determine its own governance and way forward. In addition to the absence of elected leadership, the extensive evidence of interpersonal conflict, individual harm, and dysfunction, that led the Governance Committee to the conclusion that it was not in a position to continue.

There was considerable discussion.

Motion: Alan Hall/David Leyton-Brown

2024-11-08-137

In response to NEW05 and having the benefit of the discussion at General Council 44 on October 19, 2024, and the background documentation and timeline of events, the Governance Committee recommends that the Executive of the General Council:

- 1) Affirms the importance of the relationship of the General Council Executive and staff with the Indigenous Church;
- 2) Concludes that the National Indigenous Council was experiencing dysfunction and therefore was unable to meet its responsibilities and could not continue and affirms the recall of the National Indigenous Spiritual Gathering to determine the future.
- 3) Affirms the importance that the future governance of the Indigenous Church must be determined by the Indigenous Church and understands the National Indigenous Spiritual Gathering as the appropriate and traditional body to organize the governance of the Indigenous Church and to seek a path for healing;
- 4) Encourages the National Indigenous Spiritual Gathering to draw on the Creating Safe and Respectful Environments Policy to address conflict within the National Indigenous Council and with staff serving in Indigenous Ministries and Justice;
- 5) Agrees with the concept of c) NEW05 that it would be helpful for the National Indigenous Council and the General Council Executive to clarify the relationship between these two bodies and looks forward to this collaboration when the Indigenous Church is ready to proceed;
- 6) Commits to holding the National Indigenous Spiritual Gathering in prayer;
- 7) and takes no further action on a) and b) of NEW05.

Carried

There was a motion to extend the order of the day until 4:30pm Eastern.

Motion: Alan Hall/Paul Douglas Walfall

2024-11-08-137a

GOV 06: Authority of the Office of General Secretary

As it relates to GOV04 the Moderator introduced GOV06.

There was time for questions and comments.

Motion: Alan Hall/Paul Douglas Walfall

2024-11-08-138

That the Executive of the General Council directs the General Secretary's Supervision Committee to consult with the Judicial Committee to determine if the General Secretary's action in dissolving the NIC was within the authority of the office and report back to the Executive of the General Council.

Carried

GOV 05 Communication Plan Re NEW05 Indigenous Sovereignty Proposal (Appendix III)

The Moderator invited the Acting General Secretary to introduce the proposal regarding the communication plan about NEW05 Indigenous Sovereignty Proposal.

There was time for questions and comments.

Let it be noted for the minutes that the Executive will continue to discern the ways in which we have communication with the Indigenous church.

Motion: Alan Hall/ Teresa Burnett-Cole

2024-11-08-139

The Executive of General Council might:

- 1) Endorse the attached communication plan; and
- 2) Commit to hold the decisions of the November 8, 2024 meeting of the Executive confidential until the summary of the meeting is published by the General Council Office (anticipated date of publication, the week of November 12).

Carried

Time with the Moderator

The Moderator expressed her thanks for making additional time on a Friday afternoon.

Closing Prayer

The former Moderator Richard Bott closed the meeting with a prayer.

Moderator, Carmen Lansdowne

Acting General Secretary, Alan Hall