



# The United Church of Canada General Council

## GC44 Anti-Racism and Equity Accountability Report for October 2024 Annual Meeting

Document Date  
October 19, 2024

The national work of anti-racism and equity continues to be guided by the United Church's [National Anti-Racism Action Plan](#), which was initially shaped by the Anti-Racism Common Table, a national church committee. The overall work is also guided by the United Church's [equity commitments](#). Many activities from the Anti-Racism Action Plan, as well as the equity commitments, have been incorporated into the church's overall Strategic Plan. The work of anti-racism and equity cuts across different activity teams and units.

The [Strategic Plan](#) already names the many ways that anti-racism and anti-oppression work is taking place across the church—the *what*. This report is therefore not a detailed list of these activities, since reading the report of the Strategic Plan will already offer that information. Rather, this report aims to share *how* the work is making a difference. It also names only some of the activities in order to note the types of shifts that have been taking place over the past few years.

## 40 Days of Engagement on Anti-Racism

In the area of education and advocacy, the [40 Days](#) continues to be a popular program for awareness and action. This multi-faceted anti-racism program, which began in 2021, offers online reflections with opportunities for learning, faith reflections, and action; weekly online speakers on a range of anti-racism topics; featured books in the [United Church Bookstore](#); social media supports; and a weekly newsletter. Over the past year, the number of subscribers to the weekly newsletter has increased by 9% and continues to increase. Weekly live events attract a consistent and enthusiastic audience year over year.

The program is evaluated every year, and past participants have particularly named the ways in which it has impacted their ministries. In their evaluations, participants said: “it was helpful for transformation,” it “provided different topics that could be discussed further with various groups including Council,” and “the 40 Days were a life changing experience for me. I feel I will be more confident living and working in Canada as a racialized person.”

In the weekly online events with speakers, participants have named how the program has encouraged them to listen and learn, and how it offered ideas for engaging their communities of faith. Several were inspired to try different concrete actions in their congregations.

Aspects of this program are also offered in French.

## Anti-Racism Curriculum for Leaders of Children

In response to people asking for an anti-racism children’s curriculum, we created one! [I Am a Changemaker](#) incorporates United Church theology and is a great resource for Sunday schools and children’s groups. The resource launched in the spring of 2024 after being piloted in several different congregations, and it is already being used in diverse ways. This summer, for example, [Berwick Camp](#) in Nova Scotia focused on teachings

from various Indigenous communities, and *I Am A Changemaker* was used throughout the gathering time. The Rev. Catherine Stuart—who was the VBS Coordinator at Berwick Camp and is the Regional Minister for Children, Youth and Young Adults in the Atlantic Regions—named the following:

*I Am a Changemaker* provided the children between ages 4-12 the opportunity to think about racism in both concrete and theological ways, which impacted the way they saw themselves in relation to God and to each other....

In my experience, it also empowered the leaders to have language to be changemakers themselves, both in how they lead children and how they can be leaders among their peers and friends following camp. In our time together as leaders, we reflected on the responsibility that we have as White leaders to try to shift the culture not only at the camp but in our lives as well, and how it takes courage to be able to do that. There is still much work to do in this area, of course, but using *I Am a Changemaker* certainly gave us the language and lens to begin the work of anti-racism within the Vacation Bible School Program and in the camp as a whole, from a United Church perspective. It is so important to have a program like this that uses language that we value when speaking about God, Jesus, the Spirit, along with people and our place in Creation.

This [brand-new promotional video](#) about *I Am a Changemaker* is also now available.

## **Indigenous and Racialized Youth Leadership**

Youth and young adults who are Indigenous and racialized have named and renamed their need to have space where they can gather together, talk about their racial identities, and be their authentic selves. The [Indigenous and Racialized Youth Gatherings](#)—which have now run for three consecutive summers—provide excellent opportunities for intentional leadership development, faith formation, and connection to the broader church.

This year's gatherings invited the youth to reflect on the church's Call to deep spirituality. A 22-year-old racialized young adult noted that: "There are many ways to experience spirituality. I grew up in the United Church and was taught to connect with God and the Spirit by going to church and reading the Bible...but, being here, being able to connect with nature, is spiritual in itself and connecting back to where we came from." One 19-year-old Indigenous young adult noted that "it was lovely because we were able to embrace who we were without feeling ashamed or having to experience the barriers we do in our everyday lives." Additional quotes from more

participants [are available online](#).

[Videos from past events](#) also demonstrate the impact of these programs.

## **Placing Ourselves in Colonialism**

There were opportunities to explore anti-Indigenous racism and colonialism as well as experiences of decolonization of diverse racial and cultural communities, through the online multi-session course “Placing Ourselves in Colonialism.” The course—was developed and facilitated in collaboration with the Indigenous Ministries and Justice Unit’s Reconciliation program—took place through CHURCHx over the course of several months in 2023 and drew themes from the book [Healing Haunted Histories: A Settler Discipleship of Decolonization](#).

In their evaluations, people named how much they learned, noting, for example: “How important it is to research your own history and see what part your family played in colonialism” and also that “That learning our own stories and understanding our privilege as settlers allows us to be part of changing the narrative for future generations.” It did not stop with learning alone, though! Several participants named actions they were already taking in response to the course, and ways that they wanted to implement learning with their communities of faith. One noted: “I can speak about it from the pulpit, talk over coffee, and live it.” Another said, “I have preached on colonialism. And plan to do so again. It is important to tie colonialism to climate justice.” Some also named actions beyond their local churches and in their broader community. Overwhelmingly, participants asked for another course, so in the winter of 2025 we will run new sessions that focus more on theological reflections.

## **Anti-Racism Faculty Network**

This network includes faculty members from almost every theological institution connected with the United Church. Many of the faculty had already been incorporating various aspects of anti-racism, equity, and anti-oppression into their teaching practices and individual schools before gathering together. The network—which was created in response to one of the goals in the Anti-Racism Action Plan and initiated by the Anti-Racism and Equity Lead and the Executive Minister for Theology and Ministry Leadership—enables faculty to gather online and

in-person to share more about anti-racist theologies, ways of incorporating anti-racism education into curriculum, making systemic changes, and supporting one another while doing this crucial work. The impact is already being felt, with emerging ministry leaders being educated with an integrated approach to anti-oppression woven into their theological studies.

## **Equity, Diversity, and Anti-Oppression Education for National Committees**

Beginning in 2023, members of national committees were encouraged to participate in education focused on equity, diversity, and anti-oppression (EDA). These educational sessions were in two parts: they first took place online individually, followed by a group discussion and integration session with each committee. The sessions incorporated aspects of anti-racism, as well as broader elements of anti-oppression work. Following the education session, 96% of respondents reported that they believe their committee will integrate EDA into its work going forward. Chairs rated the highest level of agreement to the statement that their committee would integrate EDA commitments into their work. Ninety percent of participants noted that the e-training modules helped them to understand how they can apply EDA to the work of their committee, and 96% of respondents said they believe that their committee will (or will continue to) use the EDA commitments in their work. The education sessions contributed to a culture shift in committees, where EDA work is more grounded and at the forefront. This kind of shift enables fuller participation of people from all identities, and helps to build a better place of belonging for people on committees.

## **Leadership Counts**

In November 2021, the United Church launched [Leadership Counts](#), a voluntary identity survey for ministry personnel and members of national committees. Because the United Church is committed to equity and the full participation of all peoples and identities, the survey focuses on seven specific identities related to those commitments. The survey also offered respondents the chance to share how they name their cultures, languages, races, genders, orientations, and disabilities.

As of June 30, 2024, a total of 1,825 people have participated in the survey, including 73% of national committee members (lay and ministry personnel) and 54% of active ministry personnel and candidates (overall 41.6% of all ministry personnel, including active ministers, retired ministers, admission ministers, and those on medical leave).

The church has never before had this level of data about the equity identities of United Church leaders. This data is being used to raise key questions about barriers faced by leaders of diverse groups, to reflect on additional strategies for education and awareness, and to do long-term planning around equity and anti-oppression.

## **Continuing the Work**

The [Becoming an Anti-Racist Church video](#) focuses on ways that local communities have been engaged in anti-racism work in different places and spaces. Knowing that The United Church of Canada made a commitment to becoming an anti-racist denomination in 2020, in this video, people respond to the question: what has this commitment meant to your community of faith or network?

There is much more anti-racism and equity work taking place across the church nationally, regionally, and locally.

This overall report highlights of a few national initiatives that are among the many that are having a tangible impact on shifting the church, and that are continuing to move us closer to our call to become an anti-racist denomination.

Document Type: [Report](#)

General Council: [GC44](#)

Originating Body: [Other](#)

Status: [For Review](#)