



**The United Church
of Canada
General Council**

GC44 Embodying UNDRIP, Legacy of Mission Summary for October 2023

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Background

In 2016, in response to the Call to Action 48 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, The United Church of Canada adopted the “principles, norms, and standards of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a framework of reconciliation.”

We understand those principles, norms, and standards to be that Indigenous Peoples have the right to:

- self-determination
- participate in decision-making
- cultural and spiritual identity
- lands and resources
- free, prior, and informed consent
- be free from discrimination

Our theological framework for this work is found in 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 – “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself...and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.”

At time of our statement, we acknowledged that “this work will be neither quick nor easy,” and also that “we know, not just in our hearts and minds, but where our faith resides, that this is the path we are meant to be on together.”

Initial Focus: Education and Advocacy

Initially, the Reconciliation and Indigenous Justice Animators in the Indigenous Ministries and Justice (IMJ) Unit delivered workshops and prepared a range of other materials to educate church committees and councils as well as communities of faith on what these principles, norms, and standards could mean in their work. We also participated in ecumenical advocacy on bills to adopt the Declaration in Canadian law. This was achieved in 2021, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act although implementation remains an issue, as ongoing struggles with free, prior, and informed consent in pipeline projects can attest.

The Shift to Embodiment

With the adoption of the *Caretakers' Calls to the Church*, and with the guidance of the National Indigenous Council and the National Indigenous Elders' Council, the UNDRIP focus began to shift from education within the church and federal advocacy to consideration of how the Declaration and the Reconciliation project itself was having an impact in Indigenous lives, communities, and churches.

Consequently, we have been seeking to involve the non-Indigenous church in advocacy and acts of public witness for the rights of Indigenous people. This has included engagement in the Moose Hide campaign addressing Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit People, and in supporting the #SearchTheLandfill movement related to the Brady and Prairie Green landfills in Winnipeg. We have also continued our focus on the inequities in Indigenous child welfare, medical care, and education through Have A Heart Day in February, and on remembering those who attended residential institutions and those who continue to be impacted by colonial policies on Orange Shirt Day/National Day of Truth and Reconciliation on September 30.

UNDRIP is also embodied in the principles of "Bringing the Children Home," part of the church's initiative to address TRC Calls to Action 73-76 related to missing children and unmarked burial sites at the sites of former residential institutions. This includes including financial and archival support to communities, and reporting to the Special Interlocutor on Missing Children and Unmarked Burial Sites on our compliance with the TRC Calls to Action and UNDRIP, access to records and materials, and emerging issues.

The principles of UNDRIP are resonant in the National Indigenous Church's proposal to General Council 44 on creating a new national Indigenous organization, and in the remit supporting this. A significant investment of time has been made in preparing materials to support the remit as a commitment to UNDRIP.

Finally, work continues on TRC Call to Action 46, on the Covenant of Reconciliation, which would further cement UNDRIP in Canadian political and legal frameworks.

If you have questions regarding this report please email them to info@generalcouncil44.ca.

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