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Note from Nora - June 28, 2017



THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA
L'ÉGLISE UNIE DU CANADA

June 28, 2017

Our reconciliation journey continues.



This time between [National Aboriginal Day](#) and Canada Day is a good time for some reflection.

Some voices have questioned why we should celebrate [Canada 150](#) at all when our nation's relationship with the Indigenous peoples of this land is still so flawed.

Another way of looking at it would be that we could use this occasion to remember all our history, the good and the bad, and to celebrate the things we are proud of, and commit to do better on the rest.

It's a sign of some progress that Canadians are now aware of the need to do better in ways that would have seemed amazing at the time of our much celebrated Centennial in 1967.

As people my age remember, in those days we used to call the July 1 holiday "Dominion Day," in reference to Genesis 1:26: And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea,

and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

The words on the [United Church Crest](#) now bear the Mohawk words “Akwe Nia'Tetewá:neren,” which translate in English to “All My Relations.” Where the “have dominion over” wording speaks of a hierarchy with humans at the top, “all my relations” speaks to the interconnectedness of all of God’s creation. The changes to the Crest were made in recognition of the way in which the Indigenous congregations in our founding churches were left out of the decision-making process at the time the United Church was formed.

Our church and our country have committed to the principles of the [UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#), which include the principle of “free, prior, and informed consent,” so that decisions that affect the rights of Indigenous people need to include them in the decision making. It’s a powerful phrase that is easier to say than to live out. Let us give thanks to God that we are part of a church, and a country, that are trying to live these principles out.

Much has changed, and much remains to be done.

On June 21 I had the privilege of attending Convocation at Western University to see my friend from my Yellowknife United Church days, Marie Wilson, receive an honorary degree. It was nostalgic for me being back at Western, and I realized as I arrived that it is 40 years since my graduation there! Marie spoke to the graduating students and their families about the work of the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#) and the ways that they need to be part of this work in their lives and careers. It was a wonderful speech... but I expected that. What I hadn’t really expected, hadn’t thought about, was that the ceremony would begin with an [Acknowledgement of Territory](#) [PDF]. That would not have been imagined at the time of my graduation, nor would the many other efforts and recognitions that are increasingly part of life in Canada.

There is still a long road ahead. We have come a long way. Both things are true. Let’s celebrate the journey we are on together.

Thanks be to God.

Nora