

## **M4RR #18 - UNDRIP**

On March 31<sup>st</sup> it will have been a year since the United Church responded to Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action #48, adopting and complying with the principles, norms, and standards of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the framework for reconciliation.

Our response to UNDRIP was done at the same time as the release of an ecumenical statement expressing the commitment of a diverse group of churches to the Declaration.

Last summer, Manitou Conference welcomed visitors from across Canada to a ceremony at the Apology Cairn, at Laurentian. Those gathered participated in a ceremony marking the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our first Apology to First Nation sisters and brothers.

The United Church has been on a journey toward reconciliation since the 1980s, when Indigenous members of the church requested an apology for the church's role in colonization. While we have taken many steps together in that journey, it remains an ongoing process. As the church's statement says, adopting the UN Declaration as our framework of reconciliation "requires us to revisit our identity as a church, and how that identity does or does not foster relationships of mutuality, equality and respect, both within and beyond the walls of the church."

While this poses challenges, "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."

We have adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a commitment to honouring that expectation of Indigenous Peoples in the United Church.

We understand the principles, norms, and standards of the Declaration to be reflected in:

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

Indigenous Peoples are self-determining and engaged in the church's decision-making processes. One key structure for this is the Aboriginal Ministries Council and its constituent parts. But we also understand that our practices "for many years resulted in the exclusion of Indigenous Peoples from visioning, leadership and decision-making." (*The Manual*, 2013, p.4)

Time has been allocated at this June's Conference General Meeting to receive an update on how UNDRIP will continue to inform and shape our ongoing commitment to healing and reconciliation for The United Church of Canada's role in the Indian Residential School system.

We are not sure what lies ahead as we deepen our commitment to a new relationship, and a new way of being, both in the church and in the world.

Will Kunder, member of the Manitou's Living into Right Relations Home Group.

Resource:

[Wrongs to Rights: How Churches Can Engage The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Intotemak \(Mennonite Church Canada\), 2016.](#)