

# Remit Preparation

## The United Church of Canada and its relationship with Indigenous members

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## What's the Issue?

- Called to continue constructing the governance framework of the National Indigenous Circle (NIO).
- Requires changes to the church's structure to properly reflect the governance of the Indigenous United Church and its relationship to the General Council and General Council Executive.

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## Why is a Remit needed?

- Required when an amendment is made to the Basis of Union – our agreement concerning how we will live with each other.
- General Secretary called for this remit process and the General Council commissioners agreed with him.
- Needed because the Indigenous Church is changing how they function and are organized.
- Need to end the “hand in hand” permission giving...

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## A Quick History

*The story is two steps forward, on step back*

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## Significant Dates

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- 1825 – Grand River Methodist Mission
- 1925 – Church Union – treated like children
- 1948 – UCC Brief to the Parliamentary Committee on the Reform of the Indian Act – no more residential schools
- 1960s – The Civil Rights Movement, starts Indigenous
- 1977 – First Review of UCC Work with Indigenous Peoples

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- 1980 – National Indigenous Consultations begin
- 1980 – 1987 – Indigenous Theological Educational Centres
- 1986 – First Apology
- 1988 – Formation of All Native Circle Conference
- 1992 – First Indigenous Moderator – Rt. Rev. Stan McKay
- 1994 – The Healing Fund
- 1996 – First Residential School Court Case – Port Alberni
- 1998 – Second Apology
- 2006 – UCC signs Indian Residential Schools Agreement

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- 2008 – Aboriginal Ministries Circle is formed at GCO
- 2011 – Sandy Saulteaux Spiritual Centre formed
- 2012 – Change to UCC Crest
- 2015 – TRC concludes – UCC present at all gatherings
- 2019 – Church restructures – NIO is formed with National Indigenous Council and National Elders’ Council
- 2021 – 215 graves found at Kamloops – trust erodes again
- 2022 – Rev. Dr. Carmen Lansdowne is elected Moderator

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## Time for a different relationship

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- No more “missions to the Indians” – the UCC must move toward being “partners in God’s call to all the earth”
- Two-Row Wampum Belt – Covenant that speaks of two peoples travelling down a river, each in their own canoe. With respect, we need to allow one another to simply be who we are...in all our complexity

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## So what do we do about it?

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- Pre-emptive remit – no more “hat in hand” approaches to the Settler Church
- Settler Church must clear the path so that the Indigenous Church could continue their work in a decolonial manner
- Stop trying to fit a “round peg” into a flow chart of boxes

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## Some Questions that you may be asking

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## Who is the Indigenous Church?

- Indigenous identity is complex and more than the idea of an “Indigenous Church” can convey.
- ±66 Communities of Faith from Kanesatake and Kahnawake in the east to Haida Gwaii in the west.
- Average Sunday worship is ±1,000 worshippers
- Composed of many overlapping nations, communities, clans, and languages

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## Why doesn't the settler church ask the Indigenous church to develop a structure first?

- Because the settler church has already declared that the Indigenous church has both a “right to self-determination” and a “right to cultural and spiritual identity” of its own.
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Report, the Caretaker’s Calls to the Church, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People – all of which various General Council have accepted and endorsed.

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## **Is the purpose of this remit to create a separate church?**

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- No, in that we are still in relationship and working towards greater “nation-to-nation” relationship.
- No, in that the Indigenous church exists within the legal framework of the UCC.
- Yes, in that it will create a unique structure **WITHIN** the United Church of Canada.

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## **Will this lead to the break-up of the UCC into many different entities with different rules?**

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- The remit is about continuing the path of reconciliation and about the self-determining National Indigenous Circle.
- Based on TRC 48, UNDRIP, and the Calls to the Church
- A similar grant autonomy to a group within the settler church would require a remit process.
- It is good to acknowledge tensions within the settler church.

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## Would there be limits on the autonomy being granted to the National Indigenous Circle?

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- Autonomous organization within the UCC
  - The NIC will “determine its structures and processes” through its own methods on its own timeline.
- *The Calls to the Church*
  - We Will Say What Indigenous Ministry Is
  - We Will Do Indigenous Theology
  - We Will Say Who We Are
- The settler church, even with Indigenous participation, will not determine the NIC structure and processes.

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Possible areas of “joint” action and decision-making:

- Covenants between particular Indigenous Communities of Faith, the NIC and a Regional Council (already exists).
- Some aspects of credentialing of clergy, to the extent clergy would move between Indigenous and Settler church (already exist).
- Basis of Union S. 2 Doctrine
- Model Trust Deed, as it applies to Indigenous Communities of Faith
- The Pension Fund, benefits plan, educational pathways, publishing

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## Will the NIC be able to adopt policies different from general UCC policies?

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- It will have the power to make policies in the areas in which it is autonomous.
  - The goal is for policies that are made by, for, and contextual to the Indigenous church.
  - However, on core policies like personnel, they will be the same.
- Is the fear about policies “contrary to” UCC policies?
  - There is already a degree of freedom in a variety of areas granted to Regional Councils and Communities of Faith.

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## How will NIC operations be financed?

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- Underlying questions: who will pay?
- The Remit does not speak to this question.
- At this time, the Indigenous Church will continue to be financed as has been the custom. The only difference is that, like other regions, they will decide how to allocate the funds they are allotted.

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## How will NIC operations be financed?

- Total 2014 income
  - Indigenous Church Communities of Faith: \$635,222
  - Total Income of Settler Church: \$384,993,716
  - Settler Church has income over 600 times larger than the Indigenous church, at the community of faith level.
  - Indigenous Church, all in, about 4% of our operating budget/

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## Your Pastoral Charge's Participation Matters

A pastoral charge that simply doesn't reply is counted as a No vote.

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