

May 2019

Dear Siblings in Christ:

I write to you as The United Church of Canada prepares to observe the first National Indigenous Peoples Day (June 21) in our new form. Conferences and presbyteries have been reshaped into new regions, and in response to the *Calls to the Church*, the relationship between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous expressions of the church is changing too.

Since 1988, the All Native Circle Conference (ANCC) has been home to most Indigenous congregations, while those in British Columbia and some in Ontario and Quebec stayed within existing Conferences. Now, Indigenous communities of faith, the regions, and the National Indigenous Council are having conversations to determine relationships in our new context. These will be discussed and new Indigenous governance structures will be launched at the 2019 National Indigenous Spiritual Gathering in August.

It's an exciting time. The opportunity for the settler/newcomer church to be in different, closer communion with Indigenous relations feels full of promise. It is a time of great change for the whole church—a time to let go and a time to build up.

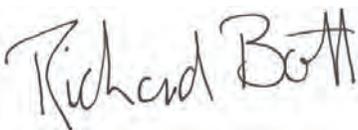
On National Indigenous Peoples Day, I urge us all to commit to these new relationships, to being good relations with each other as we continue to be The United Church of Canada. As a symbol of our commitment to each other and to right relationship, this mailing includes a small gift to your community of faith—a booklet that outlines the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and the entire text of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

These two texts are, as National Anglican Indigenous Bishop Mark MacDonald writes in his introduction, “particularly urgent” for the Canadian church. He notes that for Indigenous peoples they “announce and protect the movement towards the renewal of their culture and societies on the land,” and “for those who have perpetrated or profited from the colonization of Indigenous peoples, these documents declare and provide for the healing of [a] societal moral wound.”

The United Church has committed to helping to fulfill all the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It has adopted the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the framework of reconciliation. It is my prayer that you will read, study, and discuss the materials in this booklet; that you will take them to heart, and live them out. You might begin, if you have not already done so, by learning about and acknowledging the treaty or traditional territory that your church stands on.

It is also my prayer that, in recognition of National Indigenous Peoples Day, you will reflect our commitment to a new relationship in your service of worship. Please see the United Church website for materials.

All My Relations,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Bott". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Richard Bott
Moderator