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Dear friends;

Congratulations on being chosen to serve on the new National Indigenous Council. You are an impressive group and I look forward to supporting or accompanying you in your work in whatever ways might be helpful.

Executive Minister

Your direct support will be from the Executive Minister, Indigenous Ministries and Justice. Maggie Dieter is serving in that role until the end of August, and Cheryl Jourdain will be in the "acting" role for the transitional period following that, as you get started in your work and until a new Executive Minister is chosen. As with the Regional Council Executive Ministers, this position reports to me, but is accountable for serving you, the National Indigenous Council.

I look forward to working with you on the process of selecting the new Executive Minister. Might I suggest that sometime this fall it would be helpful if you could identify two or three of you to serve on the search committee. This process does not need to be rushed, as you may want some time to clarify expectations for the position, and to get familiar with the work yourselves. Cheryl has agreed to serve for a period of 6 – 12 months in order to give this process the time it needs.

Follow up to the National Indigenous Spiritual Gathering

It was a passionate and Spirit filled meeting, and it seemed to me that the clearest thing about which there was consensus was that the participants in the Gathering have entrusted you to make the decisions that reflect the wishes of the meeting and the needs of all the Indigenous members and communities of faith in the United Church of Canada.

Where any decisions from the National Indigenous Spiritual Gathering, or any decisions you make following that meeting, require structural changes for the United Church, there is an opportunity to take those to the October 19 meeting of the 43rd General Council. This is the same body that met in Oshawa last year, and they are being recalled annually by electronic means until the next full in person meeting of the General Council takes place in 2021.

It seems clear that the proposals received from the workbook on the priorities of the National Indigenous Council, and the membership of the Candidacy Board were approved by the Gathering by consensus. These do not require any action by General Council because they are your decisions to make.

It seems less clear what else was being approved by consensus, because there were so many different perspectives being offered and nothing was put to the gathering in a formal written way. That leaves it to you to interpret what you think the sense of the meeting was, and to clarify that direction so that a proposal can be taken to General Council in October to have those decisions confirmed.



If it is your sense that the meeting generally was in support of having the National Indigenous Organization be named as a "region" that is something that would need to go to General Council, and my suggestion would be that it could be done in a way that respects the wishes of all to be part of the national organization, and within that, the wishes of some to do certain things themselves within their own geographic areas, and of others to covenant with their geographic regions for those things.

If this is the goal, the way of achieving it technically would be to have General Council:

- Name the National Indigenous Council as having the same powers and responsibilities as a Regional Council; (they could name it as a "region" but actually regions are not the bodies that have been given powers and responsibilities, it is the regional councils". You might prefer a term like, "National Indigenous Regional Council, although if that sounded like an oxymoron you might want to come up with a different name altogether)
- Retain the ability for the National Indigenous Council or local groups within it to covenant with Regional Councils to have certain work done on behalf of the National Indigenous Council (perhaps all local/regional groups within the National Indigenous Council would have covenants with geographic regions, but those covenants could vary in what they covered)

If the National Indigenous Council had the same powers and responsibilities as a Regional Council, that would include, without it having to be stated separately:

- The ability to ordain
- The ability to create commissions which would have full decision making authority for the responsibilities delegated to them by the National Council. (This would be the technical mechanism for allowing a local group, for example the congregations that were formerly part of the Keewatin Presbytery, to have the decision making powers and responsibilities they are calling for)

You might also find it helpful to clarify or adjust **terminology** about the national body. In the regional councils, the "regional council" is actually all the community of faith and ministry representatives who come to the big meeting, and the smaller group entrusted to carry out directions from the Regional Council and to make decisions on their behalf between meetings of the full council is called the Executive. So you might want to consider the full National Indigenous Spiritual Gathering to be the Council, and refer to your smaller body as the Executive, OR you might want to have the full National Indigenous Spiritual Gathering (or whatever name it might be given) given the powers of a Regional Council, and have the National Indigenous Council be the equivalent of a regional council executive.

I hope I haven't make this too complicated, but I am just trying to help to make sure that any decisions that you need confirmed by General Council are clear enough that we can get the correct material to General Council.

Other things that were talked about at the National Indigenous Spiritual Gathering, such as the creation of a Youth Council, are things that you can decide, and I don't see a need for those to go to General Council.

Finances

I have asked to have a full briefing prepared for you about the budget that you have responsibility for, and that will be available to you before your first meeting so that you will have the context for your decisions about activities and allocations. Cheryl will be working

with you on the timing and format and agenda for that meeting, and all briefing materials you will need.

Relationship with the General Council Executive

In accepting the Calls to the Church from the Caretakers of the Indigenous Circle last year, General Council was seeking to clarify the independence with which you, as the governing body of the Indigenous church, operates within the United Church of Canada.

The General Council is eager to respect your independence, AND to work in relationship with you. For your information, there currently are three indigenous persons who are members of the General Council Executive: Mitchell Anderson, Janet Sigurdson, and Teresa Burnett-Cole. Teresa is the Executive member who was appointed at the request of the National Indigenous Council, and therefore she has the formal responsibility of providing liaison between the two groups. My understanding is that Teresa was not a member of the National Indigenous Council, but that the Council invited her to attend their meetings to enable her to function as a liaison between the Executive and the Council. The Council would be free to continue this practice or to establish other ways of maintaining connection with the General Council Executive. Teresa was approved for a term on the Executive that goes until 2024.

Please know that I hold you in prayer as you begin this important work, and I will be happy to hear from you if there are any matters that I can help with. My email is nsanders@united-church.ca and my office phone is 1 800 268-3781 ext 2013.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nan Sanders". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.