



ELCIC Statement on Implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

National Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

March, 2016

In response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Call to Action #48, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) issues the following statement:

"We are grateful to the survivors, whose courageous witness has touched the heart of the life of our churches."¹ We acknowledge that it is the survivors' insistence on speaking truth that has brought us to this moment in history, and that has pointed the way to the hopeful and difficult work of reconciliation.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) recognizes the importance of the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the 94 Calls to Action in the TRC Final Report.

The ELCIC recognizes the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* as the framework for reconciliation. "The ELCIC endorses the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* adopted by the UN General Assembly on 13 September 2007; and adopt the declaration as a standard for our own practice. We commit to implementing the values and principles of the declaration within the work and structures of this church."²

As a church *In Mission for Others*, the ELCIC seeks to implement the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* in the following ways:

1. AS TREATY PEOPLE

The ELCIC affirms that we are all treaty people. We recognize treaties as sacred covenants involving respect, commitments, and responsibilities by all parties. We affirm that recognizing and implementing Indigenous rights is essential to being the kind of society Canada strives to be. We affirm that the ELCIC's endorsement of the declaration is a call to grow, learn, change and be transformed. "We now give you our word that our church is committed to an ongoing process of finding truth and reconciliation together. It is our hope that the sincerity of our covenant will be demonstrated in our actions and in our attitudes. We understand this to be both an urgent and a long-term commitment."³

2. AS AN INSTITUTION

The ELCIC has made the following statements:

- **2011 Convention Resolution on Encouraging Right Relationships with Indigenous Peoples**

This includes an endorsement of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*

- **2013 Joint Assembly Declaration**

This includes an expressed commitment to free, prior and informed consent for Indigenous Peoples and to addressing issues of responsible extraction.

- **2014 Expression of Reconciliation**

This includes a commitment to a long term journey of reconciliation.

- **2015 National Convention Resolution Repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery**

The above statements express both a desire and a commitment to live in healthy relationships, to work for reconciliation and to transform practices.

Over the next two years, the ELCIC will review its policies, programs, and practices in order to ensure they comply with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. This will include a review of investment policy to ensure compliance with the principles of free, prior and informed consent.

3. AS LEARNER AND EDUCATOR

The ELCIC believes we have much to learn about right relations, reconciliation and the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

As a learner, the ELCIC will seek and accept invitations to be part of discussions that help us to understand more deeply how to respect Indigenous rights.

At least once a year for the next three years, the National Church Council will learn more about reconciliation and Indigenous rights through an education session at one of its meetings. We encourage synod councils, congregations and their councils to do the same locally and contextually.

As an educator, the ELCIC will raise awareness of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* among its congregations and members. We will encourage all members to participate in discussions that help deepen understanding, and we will post a list of resources to support the educational process.

We will do this ecumenically whenever possible and will use the resources of our partners in learning and educating.

The ELCIC will work with our schools and seminaries to determine how an understanding of Indigenous rights and history will help in the education and formation of leaders.

4. AS AN ADVOCATE

The ELCIC will advocate for the implementation of all the TRC Calls to Action.

“Above all, we welcome the Commissioners’ Calls to Action as providing the basis for a wide and transformative conversation among Canadians about the better future we intend to foster, not just for Indigenous Peoples, but for all of us who long to live in a society grounded in right relationships and equity.

“We will continue to share in the work of healing and reconciliation, respectfully following the leadership of Indigenous communities and leaders, and to offer leadership among non-Indigenous Canadians where that is appropriate.”⁴

5. AS PASTORAL AND SPIRITUAL CARE PROVIDER

Spiritual care is part of life in community as church. The ELCIC feels called to be in prayerful and supportive solidarity with those who are making healing journeys. Recognizing that we have benefitted from our colonial history and identity, the ELCIC commits to offering care in appropriate ways and at appropriate times. We believe that prayer, worship, scriptures, listening, empathy, spiritual care and theological reflection can support healing journeys. We affirm that giving up colonial domination and attitudes is one type of healing journey.

“May the Creator guide us as we continue in the work of healing, justice, and right relations for the generations it will take to address that harm ‘and guide this country on a new and different path.’ (Remembering the Children prayer, 2008)”⁵

¹ Response of the Churches to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, June 2, 2015.

<http://www.anglican.ca/tr/response-of-the-churches-to-the-truth-and-reconciliation-commission-of-canada/>

² 2011 ELCIC National Convention (NC-2011-22).

³ 2014 Bishop Susan Johnson, presentation of the ELCIC’s Expression of Reconciliation at the Edmonton Truth and Reconciliation National Event.

⁴ Response of the Churches to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, June 2, 2015.

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⁵ Response of the Churches to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, June 2, 2015.

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