



CANADIAN
UNITARIAN
COUNCIL

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PROPOSED ACTION:	Truth and Reconciliation between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Canadians
PROPOSERS:	CUC Diversity Monitoring Group ¹
CONTACT:	Rev. Meg Roberts – mroberts@uuma.org ; Rev. Samaya Oakley - minister@ufon.ca ; and Marlene Blake-Seale – diversity@cuc.ca
DATE:	APPROVED May 15, 2015 at the Annual General Meeting

Background:

1. It has been 20 years since the last resolution on Aboriginal issues was adopted by the Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC). In **1995**, material was circulated to congregations for study and response on issues related to Aboriginal peoples.² A resolution was then proposed that contained a commitment to work with Aboriginal peoples in their struggles to achieve justice, particularly in relation to land rights, treaties and ending policies of assimilation and attempted extinguishments of Aboriginal rights. It also encourages congregations to establish contact with Aboriginal communities with a view to learning more about the richness of their heritage, and to work with other groups and Aboriginal communities to advance the struggle for justice, and to provide programs for their members about issues facing Indigenous peoples.

This resolution was adopted at the **1995 Annual Meeting**. It allows the CUC to make representation to government on issues of land rights, treaties and assimilation, and to support the development of a new relationship between Aboriginal peoples and Canada and encourages continuing direct contact and cooperation between our congregations and Aboriginal groups. (See Appendix E)

¹ The Diversity Monitoring Group would like to remember and honour the work of Bruce Schwartzentruber, a member of the First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto and of the CUC's Diversity Monitoring group, and the original co-mover of the proposal. Bruce died on November 10, 2014. Bruce was passionately committed to justice and equity work, and we honour his memory by continuing this work.

² 'Aboriginal peoples' is the term we have used that includes First Nation, Indian, Métis, and Inuit peoples. 'Non-Aboriginal peoples' is the term we have used that includes people from cultural backgrounds other than these.

Given that it is the twenty-year anniversary of that resolution, it is appropriate that the CUC again vote on actions to express its commitment to this work.

2. In early 2014, the Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC) Board and the Unitarian Universalist Ministers of Canada (UUMOC) endorsed an *Expression of Truth and Reconciliation* that was presented to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission at their national event in Edmonton, Alberta. Gary Groot, then CUC president, and Rev. Margaret (Meg) Roberts, UUMOC representative, made this presentation on March 29, 2014. Many CUC congregations read the statement at a Sunday service, in recognition of this event.
3. Because of the short timeline from January to March 2014, there was not an opportunity to have this statement come before a CUC Annual Meeting to be voted on by delegates (since that meeting is held in May). In recognition of the Unitarian Universalist principle promoting democratic process, this Action Proposal is brought to the delegates of the CUC congregations at the CUC Annual General Meeting of May 15, 2015, so they have the opportunity to endorse this *Expression of Truth and Reconciliation*, (found in Appendix D) in solidarity with the CUC Board and UUMOC members.

Therefore, in order to further fulfill the previously approved resolution of 1995, we propose the following actions:

- 1) The Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC) with its member congregations endorse and act upon the *Expression of Truth and Reconciliation*, as presented to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on March 29, 2014;
- 2) The CUC will direct its Board of Trustees and staff, and encourage its member congregations, to take these specific steps to advance the journey towards truth, healing and reconciliation between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal peoples *in Canada*, within our congregations and in society at large:
 - Provide educational opportunities regarding the history and impact of the Indian Residential School system; and
 - Provide educational opportunities about racial equity and intercultural competency.
 - Provide opportunities to learn more about the richness of Aboriginal spirituality and cultures, working hand-in-hand with Aboriginal peoples to advance the struggle towards justice and reconciliation.

APPROVED as amended.

ACTION PLAN FOR PROPOSERS – TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

An Action Plan accompanies each proposed motion, outlining action steps that might be necessary to implement the motion. This is to provide delegates with a clear idea of the resources that might be involved, and how much staff and volunteer time needs to be allocated.

The Proposers suggest the following actions to support the implementation of their motion, if approved by delegates at the Annual General Meeting:

PROPOSED ACTION	DETAILS	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE	SUGGESTED COMPLETION DATE
For Diversity Monitoring Group's Truth, Healing & Reconciliation Reflection Guide Task Force	1) To assemble and promote life-span educational materials for our congregations regarding the history and impact of the Indian Residential School system, in consultation with Aboriginal individuals and groups. Materials will be provided for adults; youth; upper elementary; and lower elementary. 2) To include in those materials ways congregations and their members can learn more about the richness of Aboriginal spirituality and cultures, and work hand-in-hand with Aboriginal peoples to advance the struggle towards justice and reconciliation.	Co-chairs of task force and members, answering to the Chair of the Diversity Monitoring Group	2 age groups material – August 2015 3 other age groups material – December 2015
For Diversity Monitoring Group	To complete and promote a new Diversity program about inclusion, diversity, equity, accessibility and intercultural competency.	DMG Chair and members; CUC staff	Ongoing

PROPOSED ACTION	DETAILS	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE	SUGGESTED COMPLETION DATE
For CUC	1) Communicate this decision to all member congregations. 2) Provide opportunities via the CUC website, Canadian Unitarian newsletter, and other communication vehicles, for congregations to share their experiences about their activities in response to this action proposal.	Executive Director	May 31, 2015 Ongoing
For CUC Board	Provide educational opportunities for the Board of Trustees and staff: 1) Regarding the history and impact of the Indian Residential School system. 2) Regarding racial equity and intercultural competency. 3) To learn more about the richness of Aboriginal spirituality and cultures, working hand-in-hand with Aboriginal peoples to advance the struggle towards justice and reconciliation.	President and Board members	Ongoing
For CUC Staff	Provide educational opportunities for staff: 1) Regarding the history and impact of the Indian Residential School system. 2) Regarding racial equity and intercultural competency. 3) To learn more about the richness of Aboriginal spirituality and cultures, working hand-in-hand with Aboriginal peoples to advance the struggle towards justice and reconciliation.	Executive Director	Ongoing

PROPOSED ACTION	DETAILS	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE	SUGGESTED COMPLETION DATE
For Member Congregations	To take action in response to the three commitments in the statement. Engage with materials, providing feedback on materials used.	President/Board of congregations Members/Boards/Committees	Ongoing

APPENDIX D TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

Canadian Unitarian Council Expression of Truth and Reconciliation, March 2014:

We, the Canadian Unitarian Council and the Unitarian Universalist Ministers of Canada, commit to the journey of healing and reconciliation between Canadian Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal people. Today, as we acknowledge and accept our responsibility for truth-telling, healing and reconciliation, we commit to these specific steps to advance that journey:

1. To assemble and promote educational materials for our congregations regarding the history and impact of the Indian Residential School system.
2. To create and promote a new program for congregations about racial equity and intercultural competency.
3. To continue to encourage our congregations and their members to learn more about the richness of Aboriginal spirituality and cultures, working together to advance the struggle for justice for Aboriginal people.

To further express our understanding and commitment to change we offer the following acknowledgement that the principles which Unitarian Universalists affirm were transgressed in the Canadian Indian Residential School system and by government legislation.

- **The inherent worth and dignity of every person.** This was denied when you were forced to relinquish your cultural identities and denied the nurturance of your families and communities.
- **We affirm justice, equity, and compassion in human relations.** These were violated when parents were forced to give up their children to a school system where so many children were emotionally, physically and sexually abused.
- **We seek to accept one another and encourage each other's spiritual growth.** This was disallowed when your spiritual practices were outlawed and another religious tradition imposed upon you.
- **We support a free and responsible search for truth and meaning.** Although many children received basic education, they were also used for manual labour, living in unsanitary conditions, leading to thousands of deaths from tuberculosis and other contagious diseases.
- **We promote the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large.** The mere imposition of this school system was a clear violation of the use of any democratic process.
- **We affirm the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all.** How could this be achieved when government legislation revoked the basic rights of Aboriginal people to govern themselves?

- **We respect the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.** This principle is integral to Aboriginal cultures. Not only did non-Aboriginals lose an opportunity to learn from your culture, this understanding was all but eradicated from your children's way of life by this school system.

We must learn from these travesties, as well as from the strength, courage, honesty, resilience and success of those who survived the Indian Residential School system.

We have asked our congregations across Canada to read this statement. We want you to know we walk with you.

Finally, we offer this chalice, a symbol of Unitarianism, as a gift. May it light our way to truth, offer its warmth in our healing, and may its fire strengthen our commitment to the process of reconciliation.

Signed by:

Gary Groot, President of the Canadian Unitarian Council

Vyda Ng, Executive Director of the Canadian Unitarian Council

Rev. Debra Faulk, President of the Unitarian Universalist Ministers of Canada

Presented to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on March 29, 2014 in Edmonton, Alberta

APPENDIX E
First Nations Justice – Adopted at CUC AGM, May 21, 1995

In recognition of historic and continuing injustices suffered by First Nations* peoples in Canada and the current importance of redress, healing, and commitment to working out a new relationship between First Nations peoples and Canada, and

In recognition of Canadian constitutional principles entrenching aboriginal and treaty rights, and the Common Law position that Treaties be negotiated with First Nations as a means of reaching just and equitable settlements of rights to land and self-government, and

In recognition of the need for effective implementation of existing as well as future Treaties, therefore:

The Canadian Unitarian Council commits itself to solidarity with First Nations peoples in their struggles to achieve justice and, in particular, supports:

1. a just and fair settlement of land rights and the rights of self-government;
2. interpretation of existing Treaties in contemporary terms and full implementation of all Treaties in a timely and equitable manner;
3. an effective, fair, and timely mechanism for resolving treaty disputes;
4. an end to policies of assimilation and attempted extinguishments of aboriginal rights; and
5. The Canadian Unitarian Council encourages its members, individually and collectively, in their respective areas to:
 - a. establish contact with First Nations communities with a view to learning more about the richness of their spirituality, traditional teachings, languages, cultures, and the problems they face, and
 - b. work with other groups and First Nations communities to advance the struggle for justice including respect for First Nations religious and spiritual teachings, languages, cultures, and a just and fair settlement of land claims and self government; and

Moreover, the Canadian Unitarian Council:

1. supports indigenous peoples elsewhere in the world, in their struggle for justice, and notes the positive standards set, in this respect, by the United Nations Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 1993, and
2. urges Unitarians and Unitarian Universalists to provide programs and curricula about issues facing indigenous, including First Nations, peoples;
3. directs the Board of Trustees to create an ongoing national working group mandated to keep this issue before Canadian Unitarian and Unitarian Universalist societies; and to serve as a clearing house for educational resources concerning these issues; in consultation with the Board, prepare briefs, letters or press releases or other material for public release when circumstances warrant; and investigate and recommend joining appropriate coalitions.

**First Nations peoples include the Indian, Metis and Inuit peoples.*