



MCC's response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission *Calls to Action #48 and #49*

We acknowledge the long, complex history and current relationships between Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), as an institution and its workers, and the Indigenous peoples of what we now call Canada.

We recognize that while some European settlers came as powerful conquerors, others came as desperate people fleeing poverty and oppression. This is the story of many Mennonites and other immigrants to Canada, who were often violently displaced from their own lands, communities and families. Arriving in a new land with the hope of starting a new life free from oppression, we became part of another story of dispossession, of which we were initially unaware. As settlers who became part of the mainstream of society, Mennonites benefited directly or indirectly at the expense of Indigenous people, and assimilated prejudices that gave rise to the residential schools and other abuses of Indigenous people.

At the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2014, as a signatory to the Statement of Anabaptist Church Leaders, MCC said the following:

We regret our part in the assimilation practice that took away language use and cultural practice, separated child from parent, parent from child, and Indigenous peoples from their culture.

We regret that, at times, the Christian faith was used, wrongly, as an instrument of power, not as an invitation to see how God was already at work before we came. We regret that some leaders within the Church abused their power and those under their authority.

We acknowledge the paternalism and racism of the past. As leaders of Mennonite and Brethren in Christ church communities, we acknowledge that we have work to do in addressing paternalism and racism both within our communities and in the broader public.

We repent of our denomination's encounters with Indigenous Peoples that at times may have been motivated more by cultural biases than by the unconditional love of Jesus Christ. We repent of our failure to advocate for marginalized Indigenous Peoples as our faith would instruct us to.

At the same time, we know also that we have enjoyed honesty and warmth in friendships with Indigenous people and communities. We are deeply grateful for

the forgiveness and resilience of Indigenous neighbours and friends who have persisted with us through this complicated history and relationships.

In the Statement of Anabaptist Leaders to the TRC, MCC further said:

We are aware that we have a long path to walk. We hope to build relationships with First Nations communities so that we can continue this learning journey and walk this path together.

We are followers of Jesus Christ, the great reconciler. We are aware that words without actions are not only ineffective but may also be harmful. We commit ourselves to take your challenges to us very seriously. We will seek to model the reconciling life and work of Jesus in seeking reconciliation with you. We will encourage our churches to reach out in practical and loving ways, including dialogue and expressions of hospitality.

In keeping with this commitment and in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action, MCC repudiates concepts used to justify European superiority over Indigenous peoples, such as the Doctrine of Discovery. Such concepts of superiority, coercion, violence and abuse are opposed to the gospel of Jesus Christ and to the inherent dignity and equality we believe all people have received from God.

The purpose of MCC is to demonstrate God's love for all people by meeting basic human needs and working for peace and justice, with the aspiration that all people are in right relationship with God, each other and creation. In our ongoing efforts to seek right relations with our Indigenous neighbours, MCC also commits itself to using the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a guide for right relations and reconciliation. We affirm the principles of self-determination, equality and respect embedded in this Declaration, and commit ourselves anew to the ministry of reconciliation entrusted to us by Jesus Christ, the great reconciler.

We know that these words and commitments do not undo harm, nor do they ensure a path of respect and equality going forward. We still have much to learn, and are working with our member churches to understand more fully the meaning and impacts of both the Doctrine of Discovery and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We are already at work discerning what other words and actions are needed from us. We are thankful for the accompaniment of Indigenous partners and teachers in this learning and discernment. We welcome the accountability of our constituents, Indigenous partners and others in living up to this statement with integrity, and with which we intend to herald a more hopeful, respectful and just time in our friendships and partnerships with Indigenous peoples.

Approved by the MCC Canada Board, January 2017