

1 **CANADA WITNESS WORKING GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS (Working Document)**
2
3

4 **PREAMBLE**

5 This is a working document attempting to summarise the discussions and recommendations made by
6 the Canada Witness Working Group for Mennonite Church Canada. In order to better read and
7 understand what follows, a few words of introduction are needed.
8

9 Originally the Canada Witness Working Group was asked to focus its discussions on the Indigenous
10 Relations Office (IR) but also examine questions relating to church planting, camping ministry, and
11 engaging newcomer communities. However, given the limited time-frame allowed, we decided to focus
12 only on IR. We believed that the other three foci would be better addressed by other working groups,
13 and that IR was in need of our particular attention. Therefore, the following recommendations are
14 meant for the work of IR, and do not account for the work of church planting, camping ministry, and
15 engaging newcomer communities.
16

17 Through consultation with The Director of IR, local constituents of the MC Canada community, and
18 individuals working in close connection to IR, it is our strong recommendation that a full-time position
19 focused on the work of Indigenous-Settler relations on a national level remain. We are aware that the
20 pull in the transition process of MC Canada is towards a stronger regional representation. While we
21 believe this shift will work well in a number of areas of our life as MC Canada, we nevertheless believe
22 that Indigenous-Settler Relations will continue to require the need for a full-time position and budget at
23 the national level. This recommendation is what is at the heart of this document, and is what animates
24 the additional recommendations listed at the end.
25

26 As we were working on this document, we were cognisant of the fact that this work of MC Canada has
27 gone on for over 60 years, and wanted to both account for this history, and respond in such a way to
28 ensure this work has not occurred in vain. At the same time, we have been hearing of instability in
29 regional offices focused on Indigenous relations (in particular B.C.) and worry that a shift to regional
30 representation without a full-time staff at the national level will greatly threaten the work accomplished
31 by MC Canada through IR. We believe that now is not the time to destabilize the IR Office of MC Canada.
32

33 Finally, this is not a finalized document. Our work is not done, and we look forward to hearing your
34 responses.
35

36 **MISSION AND RECONCILIATION**
37

38 The history of mission in Canada is inextricably tied to the problems and possibilities of reconciliation
39 between First Nations and Settler communities. Mission activities have been used, consciously and
40 unconsciously, intentionally and unintentionally, to further colonial expansion and imperialist
41 expropriation of Indigenous peoples' land, wealth, and resources. Even more egregious was (and is) the
42 deprecation of Indigenous languages, cultures, traditions, and social structures in the name of
43 'Christianisation' and 'civilisation.' Mission activities have thus been responsible for much of the pain
44 and suffering visited upon Indigenous communities, and the legacy of these missions continues to be an
45 open wound hindering possible reconciliation.
46

47 Various Christian communities, including Mennonite Church Canada, have recognized their
48 responsibility for and complicity in these past and present evils, issuing formal apologies and seeking

1 forgiveness and rapprochement. However, much work remains before relationships can be healed and
2 true reconciliation achieved. Given the history of colonialism and oppression, and the continuing social,
3 economic, cultural, and political inequality which exists between Indigenous and Settler communities, it
4 falls to Christian communities to sacrificially relinquish power and privilege in order first to understand
5 and be understood by their Indigenous others, and only then hope to create new and just relationships
6 towards a lasting reconciliation.

7
8 Mennonite Church Canada has already begun this process by acceptance, in 2014, of the *Mennonite*
9 *Church Canada Indigenous Relations: Purpose, Priorities, and Processes* document (see Appendix 1).
10 Though laudable in its intentions, its aims and scope were too broad to serve as an action plan for the
11 national church. Furthermore, that document relied on now outdated models of
12 interreligious/intercultural engagement and, given its inception date, could not respond to the
13 directions of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Final Report (particularly, the *94 Calls*
14 *to Action* issued in June 2015). The recommendations that follow, therefore, should be understood to be
15 an extension and revision of the aims and suggestions of the *Purpose, Priorities, and Processes*
16 document. Moreover they should be seen as an attempt to respond to current decolonization and
17 reconciliation discourses and thus a rectification of our aims and objectives going forward, particularly in
18 light of the need to humbly partner with our Indigenous neighbours in the process of reconciliation.

19
20 While the responsibility to own up to the missionary past falls squarely with Christian communities,
21 successful reconciliation can only occur through the gracious willingness of Indigenous communities to
22 engage with Settlers, generously offering them their time, knowledge, understanding and friendship.
23 Any reconciliation can proceed only with humble acknowledgement of this fact.

24 25 **Redescribing and Revaluing Mission**

26
27 In the process of seeking reconciliation, the notion of Christian mission and witness will need to be re-
28 described and revalued. Mission was never meant to lead to forcible conversion of others nor
29 transformation of their cultures. Rather, Christians witnessed to the grace and forgiveness they had
30 themselves received from Christ, testifying that this was freely available to all who sought it. In the light
31 of centuries of colonialism, racism, and oppression, such a witness needs now to be *kenotic* – that is self-
32 emptying – in a radical act of self-subjugation to the other. Whereas Christian Settlers have benefitted
33 from 'othering' Indigenous communities, they must now submit to being 'othered' themselves. Christian
34 communities seeking true reconciliation must humble themselves and rely on the grace and goodwill of
35 those whom they have oppressed to help them reconstruct themselves with true penitence. This is not
36 an act of martyrdom, hiding as it may a covert triumphalism, but rather of kenosis - a modest self-
37 effacement seeking an authentic witness to grace. It is only with the help of Indigenous communities
38 that Christian settlers can be reconciled to their neighbors and themselves.

39
40 The long process of reconciliation will thus redescribe witness and mission for the 21st century. Christian
41 communities who are committed to honestly responding to the TRC report's recommendations must
42 therefore relinquish comfortable and self-serving traditions and be willing to be remade along with our
43 Indigenous sisters and brothers towards a greater vision of grace and human flourishing. As a practical
44 step to begin this long journey, it is essential that Mennonite Church Canada continue with a permanent
45 office, staff, and budget to address the many challenges the Church will face as it remakes itself for the
46 coming century. Recognition of our complicity in the history of oppression of our Indigenous hosts on
47 this land, and humble repentance and willingness to be remade in Christ as we seek to reconcile with

1 our neighbours, will depend in no small part on Mennonite Church Canada's commitment to resource
2 this office.

3

4 **MAINTAINING AND TENDING TO RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMITMENTS: A SAMPLE**

5

6 The following is a sampling of some of the relationships and commitments that Mennonite Church
7 Canada Indigenous Relations (IR) is currently holding. This list is far from exhaustive, not naming many of
8 the ongoing working friendships cultivated with grassroots Indigenous-Settler communities and
9 mobilizers from various territories/provinces, or the spontaneous educational resources/initiatives that
10 IR dreams up, or the one-time events/gatherings that IR regularly helps facilitate (a significant aspect of
11 this work). For instance, as concerns one-time events, IR was a lead organizer in a three-day "TRC Call to
12 Action" conference this past fall which involved a variety of ecumenical and Indigenous partners. That
13 event has long passed. Numerous others have since come and gone. And this month alone, IR is helping
14 pull off four similar, albeit smaller events, with a diverse set of partners, as we head towards July
15 1st/Canada 150. Such is the nature of a good chunk of this work; allied hearts and organizations coming
16 together to initiate educational and relational peacebuilding, without formalized commitments for
17 future/annual work...but real relationships of trust and support are being built so that we can call/lean
18 on one another when the time comes/"is right"/needed.

19

20 *Indigenous Relations*

- 21 · North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies
- 22 · Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre (affiliated with the United Church, an Indigenous theological-
23 traditional training centre – Beausejour, MB)
- 24 · Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba
- 25 · Six Nations Polytechnic
- 26 · North End Family Centre (Winnipeg)

27

28 *Ecumenical Relations*

- 29 · CPT Indigenous Peoples Solidarity
- 30 · 6 Nations – Ontario Ecumenical Working Group
- 31 · Manresa Working Group – Call to Action #48 on UNDRIP
- 32 · KAIROS

33

34 *Higher Education Conversation Partners*

- 35 · Canadian Mennonite University
- 36 · Conrad Grebel (via Derek Suderman and Joy de Vito)
- 37 · University of Winnipeg (via Leah Gazan)

38

39 *Resource Commitments*

- 40 · Intotemak quarterly
- 41 · Anabaptist Witness Journal
- 42 · Day School records for National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation

43

44 *Mennonite*

- 45 · Ongoing/growing congregational connections across Mennonite Church Canada constituency
- 46 · Native Mennonite Ministry (a circle of Indigenous Mennonite congregations in the U.S. that IR
47 and its predecessor, Native Ministry, has maintained relationships with for over 50 years)
- 48 · BC Inter-Menno Group

- 1 · Walking the Path (MC Sask; MCC Sask)
- 2 · Manitoba Partnership Circle
- 3 · Mennonite Central Committee
- 4 o Jubilee Fund Administration
- 5 o Indigenous Neighbours Network

6

7 *Constituency Resolutions/Commitments*

8 · In July of 2016, delegates at the Mennonite Church Canada Assembly passed a resolution on the
9 Doctrine of Discovery that call for a working group to

- 10 o *“...be formed by representatives of Mennonite Church Canada and Area Churches to begin by*
11 *reviewing the church related recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*
12 *Report, make the appropriate study material available to congregations, and make further*
13 *periodic recommendations to the General Board/Area Church Boards on steps along the path of*
14 *reconciliation.”*
- 15 o It has been communicated as of Spring 2017 that IR is to take the lead in forming and
16 mobilizing this working group. However, due to Future Directions, the working
17 group will be formed after the Fall 2017 delegate assembly. Note that a special 168
18 page book was produced by IR to help congregations understand the Doctrine of
19 Discovery and how we might respond in reparative ways (see Yours, Mine Ours -
20 www.commonword.ca/go/702).

21

22 · In March of 2014, Anabaptist leaders, including Willard Metzger of Mennonite Church Canada,
23 offered an Expression of Reconciliation at the final Truth and Reconciliation Commission event in
24 Edmonton, Treaty 6. The expression committed our denomination, in broad terms and for the long
25 haul, to ongoing education, relationship building, and advocacy.

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

29

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

33

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

36

37 *We are followers of Jesus Christ, the great reconciler. We are aware that words without actions are not*
38 *only ineffective but may also be harmful. We commit ourselves to take your challenges to us very*
39 *seriously. We will seek to model the reconciling life and work of Jesus in seeking reconciliation with*
40 *you.*

41

42 *We will encourage our churches to reach out in practical and loving ways, including dialogue and*
43 *expressions of hospitality. We commit ourselves to walk with you, listening and learning together as*
44 *we journey to a healthier and more just tomorrow.*

45

46

47

48

49

50 **ON PUBLIC COMMITMENTS, THE NEED FOR STRONG ECUMENICAL CONNECTIONS AND A**
51 **NATIONAL OFFICE**

1
2 In July 2016, Mennonite Church Canada joined a growing number of Canadian and American church
3 bodies which have officially repudiated the *Doctrine of Discovery*. Delegates at Assembly passed a
4 resolution recognizing that this *Doctrine* is “fundamentally opposed to the gospel of Jesus Christ and our
5 understanding of the inherent dignity and rights that individuals and peoples have received from God”.
6 This was done primarily in response to one of the 94 Calls to Action from Canada’s Truth and
7 Reconciliation Commission (Call to Action #49); this call in particular asks religious denominations and
8 faith groups to repudiate, or formally deny, concepts used to justify European sovereignty over
9 Indigenous lands and peoples, which is understood as a clear step forward on the path of reconciliation
10 between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples here on Turtle Island.¹ We as a larger Mennonite
11 Church Canada body must not undertake this commitment lightly, and thus have also pledged to review
12 other church-related Calls to Action from the TRC in addition to making study materials available to
13 congregations to help us live into reconciliation; all of which are important tasks currently being
14 undertaken by the Indigenous-Settler Relations program at Mennonite Church Canada.

15
16 This statement follows a tradition of public commitments that we as a larger Anabaptist community
17 have made over several decades of relationship-building. In 1987 church leaders issued "A New
18 Covenant," a landmark ecumenical statement on what was then termed Aboriginal rights. It called for a
19 new relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, one based on a recognition of the
20 inherent right of Aboriginal peoples to be distinct, self-determining nations with rights to an adequate
21 land base. Signed by the churches that now form KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, "A
22 New Covenant" acknowledged the impact of centuries of colonialism and discrimination, and sought to
23 set right historical injustices by calling on Christians, those of other faiths, "and all people of good will"
24 to continue advocating and working in solidarity to generate "public awareness and support for the full
25 recognition and implementation" of Aboriginal rights in Canada. The covenant affirmed the churches'
26 ongoing work in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples on Aboriginal rights and justice issues, as well as
27 the long journey that lay ahead.

28
29 On June 21, 2007, Mennonite Church Canada, although not a signatory of this covenant, formally spoke
30 in favour of it. Robert J. Suderman, General Secretary of Mennonite Church Canada, and Lois Coleman
31 Neufeld, Director of Canadian Programs for Mennonite Central Committee Canada, jointly made the
32 following statement:

33
34 We commit Mennonite Central Committee Canada, and Mennonite Church Canada, to the
35 vision of a new relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Peoples, based on sharing,
36 respect and the recognition of rights and responsibilities.

37
38 No less important are other forms of commitments that we have made in the circles in which the
39 Indigenous-Settler Relations program sits, both in traditional Indigenous communities and ecumenical
40 circles. Some of these relationships are outlined in the section in this report entitled “Maintaining and
41 Tending to Relationships and Commitments”. These commitments are embodied in the relationships
42 that we as a church have entered into, through this program, and that we continue to develop as part of
43 ongoing work. To our neighbours in these circles, these relationships and subsequent commitments
44 made therein are particularly powerful and are just as significant as public statements.

¹ Call to Action 49: We call upon all religious denominations and faith groups who have not already done so to repudiate concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous lands and peoples, such as the *Doctrine of Discovery* and *terra nullius*.

1
2 However, we are not the only denomination walking on this journey of reconciliation in Canada, and
3 many church bodies have made righting the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous
4 peoples a priority. In order to respond faithfully to the steps to reconciliation set out for all Canadians in
5 the TRC's final report, we cannot work in silos. Reconciliation in the Canadian context requires an
6 ecumenical attitude. In the past, the Indigenous-Settler Relations program has represented Mennonite
7 Church Canada in ecumenical circles and campaigns dedicated to reconciliation, including most recently
8 a campaign to implement the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. The
9 program has spent years developing relationships with other interdenominational and Settler allies,
10 such as Mennonite Central Committee's Indigenous Neighbours programs as well as KAIROS: Canadian
11 Ecumenical Justice Initiatives. The Indigenous-Settler Relations program is an important resource for
12 Area Churches and individual congregations across the country, and it is a resource based in cultivating
13 relationships that have been years in the making.

14
15 Too often in Canadian history have Indigenous peoples often heard commitments made, and then saw
16 those commitments subsequently broken. Many of our constituents in Mennonite Church Canada are
17 unaware of the commitments we have already made, from the 1987 "A New Covenant", to the apology
18 issued by Anabaptist church leaders at the March 2014 Truth and Reconciliation Commission gathering,
19 in addition to the more recent resolution on the *Doctrine of Discovery* (Saskatoon Assembly, 2016). To
20 many of our Indigenous neighbours, the performative power of these statements must not be
21 underestimated; anything less than full support and concrete steps taken to meet these commitments is
22 a betrayal of the principles of the relationships we have cultivated.

23
24 As a national church body, as Area Churches, and as congregations, we need to think carefully about the
25 long road ahead and what it means for us to commit ourselves to building these reconciling
26 relationships through both easy and challenging times. Reconciliation requires sustained commitment
27 over long periods; many Indigenous peoples are calling for multi-generational commitments and
28 relationships. Therefore, we see a continued need for the Indigenous-Settler Relations program to
29 remain at the national level with a program budget that allows for it to continue to make concrete steps
30 to foster and cultivate new relationships and to produce much-needed resources for our constituents
31 across Turtle Island so that we can continue to walk on that reconciliation journey. This national
32 program would also be well-suited to hold the space for the working group that will be struck to advise
33 Mennonite Church Canada on the other Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action to which
34 we are beholden as a faith group, as per the Resolution passed in Assembly in 2016.

35
36 We recognize that Mennonite Church Canada is in a unique position in that we do not have a large
37 Indigenous membership within our church body, unlike other denominations. In order to relate on a
38 peer-to-peer level with other denominations who are working at the national level, there is a need for a
39 national staff person heading the program. It is also significant that with a national staff person,
40 Indigenous peoples are easily able to identify whom they should be speaking to with regards to new
41 initiatives or relationship-building opportunities, or if there are concerns that must be raised. This does
42 not preclude the possibility of Area Churches creating regional positions dedicated to this work; indeed,
43 multiple positions working on these relationships would be complementary. However, less than a full-
44 time position dedicated to this work at the national level does not embody nor acknowledge the
45 commitments we as Mennonite Church Canada have made to our Indigenous neighbours or to other
46 Settler and church allies.

47

1 Without a vision for the Indigenous-Settler Relations program at the national level of Mennonite Church
2 Canada being re-articulated and re-evaluated based on ongoing relationships already cultivated within
3 the program, reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada will be a priority
4 only on paper.

5

6 **ON MENTORSHIP AND YOUTH**

7

8 Having an Indigenous-Settler Relations director at the National level is important for facilitating youth
9 mentorship and encouragement across our Canadian constituency. Conversations around colonization
10 and the decolonization of Turtle Island are necessary not only because the TRC and Indigenous
11 communities are calling us to this work. They are also relevant because many young Mennonites are
12 asking us to engage these matters. Their questions around and hopes for faith, identity, and the role and
13 purpose of the church in Canada are now intimately connected to how we understand settler
14 colonialism and the possibilities and paths of reconciliation with Indigenous hosts. With concern for
15 both the integrity and vitality of our 'peace church,' young people are calling us to find ways to deepen
16 and revision our historic and theological understandings of who we are as a people in these lands some
17 call Canada, and to find strengthened ways of relating to and collaborating with host peoples that
18 courageously centre their interreligious, missional and political priorities.

19

20 **Education and mentorship**

21 For the churches or constituents who have never thought about our relationship with Indigenous
22 peoples, education and mentorship is needed. The director would do this by walking alongside
23 constituents and churches with patience and understanding.

24

25 **Connecting with those already doing good work**

26 There are many constituents across Canada who are aware of the TRC and of the Mennonite history as it
27 relates to Indigenous Peoples. Having someone at the national level to encourage and foster the work
28 that is already being done is critical. The director would be both supportive and charismatic while also
29 not afraid to push boundaries or stress further education when necessary. They would be willing and
30 able to collaborate with other organizations and church groups as opportunities arise.

31

32 **Facilitating further learning**

33 As churches walk through these important conversations and begin to learn more about our part in this
34 history, it is important that resources, including workshops and educational tools, are available. It is also
35 important that they come from someone who has done lots of research and walks the path of
36 reconciliation themselves. Access to a person, rather than just digital resources, is key. There are many
37 difficult conversations that we will need to engage in the years to come regarding land and the legacies
38 of the doctrine of discovery, how we can respect diverse spiritualities, how we can revision mission, etc.

39

40 **Engaging Young-adults**

41 Young-adults (or millennials) often care quite deeply about matters of Indigenous-Settler Relations and
42 related social justice topics such as Creation Care, Land, Ecological Spirituality, and so on. Growing
43 pockets are learning to think critically about Canada (and the realities of settler colonialism) and they
44 are now seeking places where they can live out ways that nurture just relationships. They are often also
45 seeking out mentorship from generations before who they think are doing life 'in a good way.'
46 Mennonite Church Canada's congregations can be a place for such vulnerable and courageous
47 conversation, guidance, and action. We still offer a radical peace theology that is counter to the
48 dominant ways of our consumer-capitalist culture, a theology that actually has resources for the journey

1 of decolonization. We want to encourage a strengthened, conscientious, and intentional focus on social
2 justice, coupled with real opportunities for young-adults to experiment and lead. This, we believe, will
3 help nurture spiritually rich and generationally diverse congregations and encourage more millennials to
4 engage our church communities (for a helpful article on why many millennials are leaving the church,
5 see <http://frankpowell.me/ten-reasons-church-absent-millennials/>).
6
7

8 **EQUIPPING RESOURCES**

9

10 As Mennonite Church Canada shifts to a smaller national structure, the creation of equipping resources
11 focused in Indigenous-Settler relations must remain a top priority. If we long to be the church in Canada
12 with integrity - one that defends the cause of the poor, and thus knows God (see Jeremiah 22:15-16) - it
13 is important that the church equip itself to faithfully respond to the calls for justice being spoken by
14 Indigenous communities throughout Canada. We believe this is another priority of the church pointing
15 to the need to maintain a full-time position in the Indigenous-Settler Relations Office at the national
16 level.
17

18 **History**

19 One of the priorities of the Indigenous Relations Office has been to “seek to form a people of God by
20 mobilizing congregations, Area Churches, and the National Church to pursue justice with host peoples
21 and host lands” (See: *Appendix I*). A key way in which this has been accomplished is through the
22 development of resources distributed nationally. The best-selling historical and theological book, *Buffalo*
23 *Shout, Salmon Cry*, the larger quarterly *Intotemak* magazines on the TRC’s Calls to Action, the practical
24 *Paths for Peacemaking* booklet, and more have each served to encourage congregations across Canada
25 to pursue justice and seek peace with Indigenous peoples. These are resources that help us internally in
26 MC Canada, allowing churches easy and inviting ways to do the work needed to be done to walk the
27 path of decolonization. Externally, they serve as concrete signs that we as MC Canada are committed to
28 this walk. In fact, many other denominations have leaned on the resources produced by Indigenous
29 Relations to facilitate their decolonizing work. MC Canada is seen as a leader in this area.
30

31 **Current Climate in Canada**

32 With recent events in Canada such as the unveiling of the TRC’s Calls to Action and the grassroots
33 movement Idle No More, the current political climate has only increased the need for the church to
34 work on and work through good resources that assist them in answering the calls coming their way. The
35 church in Canada finds itself having to confront the ghosts of its past, examining the ways in which its
36 growth and establishment here on Turtle Island has come at the expense of Indigenous communities
37 across this land. Reflecting on the resources that have come out of Mennonite Church Canada in recent
38 years, we believe that we are doing well in walking alongside, and, when needed, amplifying the calls for
39 justice being spoken by Indigenous people throughout Canada. As we now shift to a smaller structure,
40 our hope is that our ability to continue on this path in this way is not lessened.
41

42 **National Need**

43 The need for equipping resources is one best addressed at a national level. This is for a number of
44 reasons. First, many of the calls being spoken to the church require national engagement. For example,
45 TRC Call to Action #48 calls upon denominations to adopt and comply with the minimum standards
46 outlined in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. Denominations are being
47 asked to reimagine how they relate, as a whole - including policies, confessions, missional practice,
48 advocacy, etc - to Indigenous peoples and nations. Moreover, much of this work is facilitated through

1 the co-laboring of various national denominational offices - e.g., Mennonite Church Canada's IR director
2 sits at table with the United Church's Animator of Indigenous Justice, the Anglican's Indigenous Bishop,
3 etc, and together, denominations partner, share resources, and learn from one another.
4

5 Second, a national office would allow for a more efficient and financially prudent way of developing
6 equipping resources. Rather than having resources come from each of the Area Churches, by keeping
7 this a priority on the national level we can create single resources attentive to diverse contexts that can
8 then be shared across each of the Area Churches. We want to avoid creating 5 different resources to
9 respond to one call or one need and see having a full-time National Director of Indigenous-Settler
10 Relations assisting in this.
11

12 Third, it would allow for more sites of collaboration between MC Canada members across the Area
13 Churches. One of the great benefits of the resources that have come from the Indigenous Relations
14 Office has been how they have brought together members of our National Community from each Area
15 Church.
16

17 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

18

19 Therefore the Canada Witness Working Group recommends the following:
20

- 21 1. The Indigenous Relations Office of Mennonite Church Canada be renamed 'The Indigenous-
22 Settler Relations Office' to better reflect the realities and nature of this work.
- 23 2. The Indigenous-Settler Relations Office be granted a full-time national position, plus an
24 operating budget.
- 25 3. The priorities of The Indigenous-Settler Relations Office would include:
 - 26 a. Fostering ecumenical relationships and ongoing relationships with Indigenous
27 communities and those focused on the work of decolonization in Canada.
 - 28 b. Tend to the commitments already made by Mennonite Church Canada.
 - 29 c. Mentor members of the Mennonite Church Canada community engaging in the work of
30 Indigenous-Settler Relations. This would include being attentive to the ways in which
31 youth and young adults are participating.
 - 32 d. Develop equipping resources for churches.
- 33 4. The Indigenous-Settler Relations Office focus on the work of The Truth and Reconciliation
34 Commission Calls to Action paying particular attention to those calls directed at the Church.
35

36 *Canada Witness Working Group Members: Sara Anderson, Tinu Ruparell, Jeff Friesen, Allison Goerzen,*
37 *Steve Heinrichs (staff, ex officio)*
38
39

40 **APPENDIX 1**

41

42 **Mennonite Church Canada Indigenous Relations:** 43 **Purpose, Priorities, & Processes**

44 Date: Drafted Fall of 2013, accepted by Witness Council Spring 2014
45

46 **Our Purpose**

- ❖ *Mennonite Church Canada is committed to calling, equipping, and sending the church to engage the world with the reconciling Gospel of Jesus Christ.*
- o Indigenous Relations is committed to walking the path with congregations, area churches (AC), and our national church body (NC) as we seek to embody the good news of reconciliation in the context of Indigenous-Settler relationships.
- o IR will seek to form a people of God by mobilizing congregations, AC, and the NC to pursue justice with host peoples and host lands.
- o IR will seek to become a global church by nurturing amongst congregations (colored, mixed, and white), AC and the NC a passion to become indigenized (rooted through integral relationships with host peoples/lands)
- o IR will seek to grow leaders for the church by supporting and creating opportunities for constituents within congregations, AC and the NC to walk the path of decolonization and transformative peacemaking.

Our Priorities and Core Processes

- ❖ *Form a people of God*
 - o Fostering in congregations and area churches an awareness of Indigenous peoples and Settler identities (i.e., the history, problems and promise of our relationships);
 - o Helping congregations and area churches to begin and/or strengthen just relationships with Indigenous congregations and communities in their particular locales;
 - o Equipping congregations and area churches to engage important peace initiatives relating to past/present Christian colonialism of the Indigenous (e.g. Residential and Day schools, the failure to honour covenants/Treaties, etc.)
 - o Supporting existing relationships with Indigenous congregations and communities;
 - o Intentionally exploring the creation of new, hybrid Indigenous/Anabaptist peace circles/congregations;
 - o Receiving and seeking ways as a national church to be an ambassador of Indigenous-Settler reconciliation to the larger church and mainstream society
- ❖ *Become a global church*

- 1 o Receiving the gifts and strengths of our Indigenous congregations and partner
2 Indigenous ministries, as we share our gifts (relationships, resources and
3 Anabaptist theologies) with them;
- 4 o Creating hospitality at a common table: helping congregations and area
5 churches discern ways to honour ethnic and cultural differences, to grapple
6 with the realities of racism/whiteness, and to thus cultivate life-giving,
7 shared space for peoples of all colours;
- 8 o Fostering inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue with Indigenous lifeways,
9 respectfully finding ways to receive “good news” from traditional
10 circles/communities so that our Christian faith(s) can be refined and rooted
11 in this land
- 12
- 13 ❖ *Grow leaders for the church*
- 14 o Finding/creating resources (historical, theological, ecclesial, socio-political) to
15 help pastors/congregations respectfully navigate Indigenous-Settler
16 relationships in their particular locales
- 17 o Intentionally supporting Indigenous pastors/leaders in congregations and
18 affiliated communities, resourcing them and offering learning/educational
19 experiences to help them in the journey
- 20 o Intentionally identifying Settler pastors/leaders who have a passion for
21 nurturing ‘decolonized’ relationships between their congregation, area
22 church, and host peoples, and offering learning/educational experiences to
23 help them in the journey
- 24 o Establishing internship opportunities for cross-cultural holistic learning and
25 serving; Mennonites in Indigenous contexts (both Christian and traditional)
26 and Indigenous partners in Mennonite contexts
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