**Guidelines for Grant Committees: Truth and Reconciliation in Practice in**

**Grant Committees in The Presbyterian Church in Canada**

The following are guidelines for grants committees in all courts of the church to consider in order to take into account and reflect The Presbyterian Church in Canada’s commitments to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action, and the church’s repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery in their grant deliberations, review of current criteria and applications.

**A brief summary of the Church’s Core Commitments regarding Truth and Reconciliation**:

* We repudiate concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous lands and peoples, such as the Doctrine of Discovery and *terra nullius*. (A&P 2019, pp. 35, 368-377)
* We affirm that all doctrines, policies and practices based on or advocating for superiority of peoples or individuals on the basis of national origin or racial, religious, ethnic or cultural differences are racist, scientifically false, legally invalid, morally condemnable and socially unjust. (A&P 2019, pp. 35, 368-377)
* The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples provides a clear and positive framework for reconciliation and The Presbyterian Church in Canada commits to using it to enhance our journey of healing and reconciliation with Indigenous people in Canada (Statement re: TRC Call to Action #48, available for download on the Social Action Hub at <https://presbyterian.ca/justice/social-action/indigenous-justice/> under “Official Statements of the Church”; also see Appendix A, below, for a summary of the principles of the UN Declaration.)

The following four Commitments are from the “Response of the churches to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada” (available for download on the Social Action Hub at <https://presbyterian.ca/justice/social-action/indigenous-justice/> under “Official Statements of the Church”)

* We acknowledge and welcome the specific calls to action that offer direction to the churches in our continuing commitment to reconciliation.
* We are committed to respecting Indigenous spiritual traditions in their own right.
* We will continue to foster learning about and awareness of the reality and legacy of the residential schools, the negative impact of such past teachings as the Doctrine of Discovery, and the new ways forward, such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
* We will continue our commitment to financial support for community-controlled initiatives in healing, language and cultural revitalization, education and relationship-building, and self-determination.

**What are some ways these commitments can be lived into in funding decisions?**

For the purposes of these guidelines, there are two categories of grant applications:

* grant applications involving any work with Indigenous people, organizations or nations
* grant applications not involving any work with Indigenous people, organizations or nations.

If the grant application in question **does** involve work with Indigenous people, organizations or nations the following are some good guidelines for the committee to consider:

* Does the application adhere to the basic principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples? (see Appendix A for a description of those principles below)
* Does the application respect Indigenous spirituality in its own right? See the PCC’s [2015 Statement on Aboriginal Spiritual Practices](https://presbyterian.ca/2015/01/29/statement-aboriginal-spiritual-practices/). A helpful guiding principle from that statement is: “It is not for The Presbyterian Church in Canada to validate or invalidate Aboriginal spiritualties and practices. Our church, however, is deeply respectful of these traditions. We acknowledge them as important spiritual practices through which Aboriginal peoples experience the presence of the creator God.” (The statement is online at: <https://presbyterian.ca/2015/01/29/statement-aboriginal-spiritual-practices/> )
* Has there been appropriate consultation with the Indigenous nations and their respective Treaties regarding their lands, traditions and cultures?

If the grant application in question **does not** involve work with Indigenous people, organizations or nations, the following are some good guidelines for the committee to consider:

* If the application deals with truth, healing and reconciliation, or has content about Indigenous people in Canada, but does not involve work with Indigenous people, organizations or nations:
  + What steps have been taken to ensure that content about Indigenous nations, history or experiences is accurate and appropriately reflects Indigenous knowledge, history or experiences? (e.g., if it involves a curriculum or study, was it developed by or with Indigenous people who are respected authorities by Indigenous nations or organizations on that issue or topic?)
  + How does the application take into account the harmful legacy of colonization, the church’s role therein and is it consistent with the church’s commitments regarding reconciliation?
* If the application does not directly deal with truth, healing and reconciliation, or have content about Indigenous people in Canada:
  + Does anything in the application conflict with the church’s commitments regarding truth, healing and reconciliation?
  + Does the application reflect a more global awareness of the harmful legacy of colonization, the church’s role therein, and the church’s commitments towards truth, healing and reconciliation, including the repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery and adherence to the principles of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples?

**When considering criteria for grant applications, committees are encouraged to reflect on the following:**

What is the source of the funding?

* What is the source of the funding for grant applications? (E.g., a gift from an individual; interest from investments; funds from the sale of church property or other capital.) Do you think there are connections between the source of the fund, and the history, actions or activities of colonization in Canada?
* If the fund involves investments, have you considered whether there are ways to invest in the Indigenous economy? (See, for example, [Acts and Proceedings 2021](https://presbyterian.ca/downloads/82345/), pp. 498-501, response to Overture No. 5, 2020 re Investments in Indigenous enterprises.)

Thinking about criteria

* Has the criteria been reviewed in light of the church’s commitment to truth, healing and reconciliation? (Are Trustees/Board Members/Decision Makers familiar with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples? The Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s 94 Calls to Action?)
* Are activities related to truth, healing and reconciliation a component of, or reflected or prioritized in the criteria? Is there scope for this?
* Are there paths for fund usage that might support truth, healing and reconciliation in your community context?

**APPENDIX A** – **Summary of principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

There are 46 articles describing the rights of Indigenous peoples in the Declaration. The main themes are:

1. the right to self-determination;
2. the right to be recognized as distinct peoples;
3. the right to free, prior and informed consent; and
4. the right to be free of discrimination.

The scope of the articles themselves is broad and includes, but is not limited to: life, culture, security, religion, language, education, employment, participation in decision-making, economic and social wellbeing, land and resources, self-government and Indigenous law.

An excellent resource for understanding the scope and intent of the articles was developed by Dr. Cindy Blackstock, Executive Director, First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, called “Know Your Rights: United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples for indigenous adolescents,” and is online at <https://un-declaration.narf.org/wp-content/uploads/un-adolescents-guide2013.pdf>.

Another way of framing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, is to consider the four core rights identified in the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls to overcome legacies of oppression: the right to culture; the right to health; the right to security; the right to justice, all of which are enshrined in the Declaration. A summary of the final report is online at <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Executive_Summary.pdf>.

For more resources engaging the need for truth, healing, and reconciliation, and the legacy of the church’s involvement in colonization and residential schools, see the Indigenous Justice page of the Social Action Hub at <https://presbyterian.ca/justice/social-action/indigenous-justice/>.